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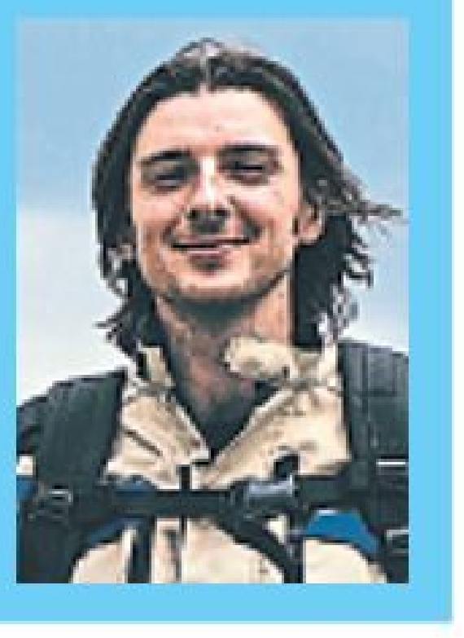
A nod from the Editor

What we've been up to this month...



Ross Mowbray

Back in business

The new bikes are coming thick and fast at the minute. Alongside the big reveals by manufacturers, bike launches are back in full swing. In the past month alone the team at MoreBikes HQ has ridden Honda's NT1100, Husqvarna's Norden 900, Triumph's Speed Triple RS, Kawasaki's Z650RS, Aprilia's Tuareg 660, and Moto Morini's X-Cape 650.

We'll have full reviews of all of them in the paper over the coming months, but in the meantime we're getting just as excited about all the new bikes that are going on sale in 2022. We've found out about plenty of them already, but with the EICMA show in Milan taking place in a few weeks' time, we'll be able to fill in the gaps and get a clear picture about what else we can expect. I love middleweight adventure bikes so I've got my eye firmly set on Ducati's Desert X. What about you? What's the one bike you can't wait to see in the flesh?

Ross
Editor

PIKES PEAK: Ducati's RACE READY Multistrada V4S

While there might not be any more motorcycle racing at the iconic Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in Colorado, USA, Ducati has chosen to stick to its guns and reveal a new version of its fully-kitted Multistrada for 2022.

With a Desmosedici GP '21-inspired paint job, lashings of carbon fibre and an Akrapovic exhaust, there's no doubt it looks the part – but what's going on beneath the surface to make the latest Pikes Peak version of the Italian adventure bike 'the sportiest Multistrada ever'?

The Italian factory has taken a Multistrada V4 S and added a selection of extra-special kit to make its already excellent motorcycle even better. It's tweaked the riding position, fitted some 17-inch Marchesini forged aluminium wheels (in place of the 19-inch front wheel of the standard bike), and clad them with sticky Pirelli Diablo Rosso IV tyres. There's also a single-sided swingarm, Öhlins semi-active suspension, and the new Race rider mode. Ducati reckons it's the sportiest Multistrada it's ever developed – and looking at all that, it's easy to see why.

While it might be powered by the same V4 Granturismo engine as the standard bike, with 170hp at 10,500rpm and 125Nm at 8,750rpm, the ECU has been reprogrammed to help offer a sportier and more aggressive power delivery.

There's a quick shifter to aid sharper gear changes, while the newly added Race rider mode dials down from Ducati Traction Control and the Ducati Wheelie Control and reduces the interference from the ABS.

As you'd expect, all the good stuff doesn't come cheap. The Multistrada V4 S Pikes Peak will set you back £24595, which makes it nearly three grand more expensive than the V4 S in standard form. Looking at what you get for your money, it is probably worth it, but you'll have to have deep pockets not to balk at the extra expense.

BMW updates the K 1600 series

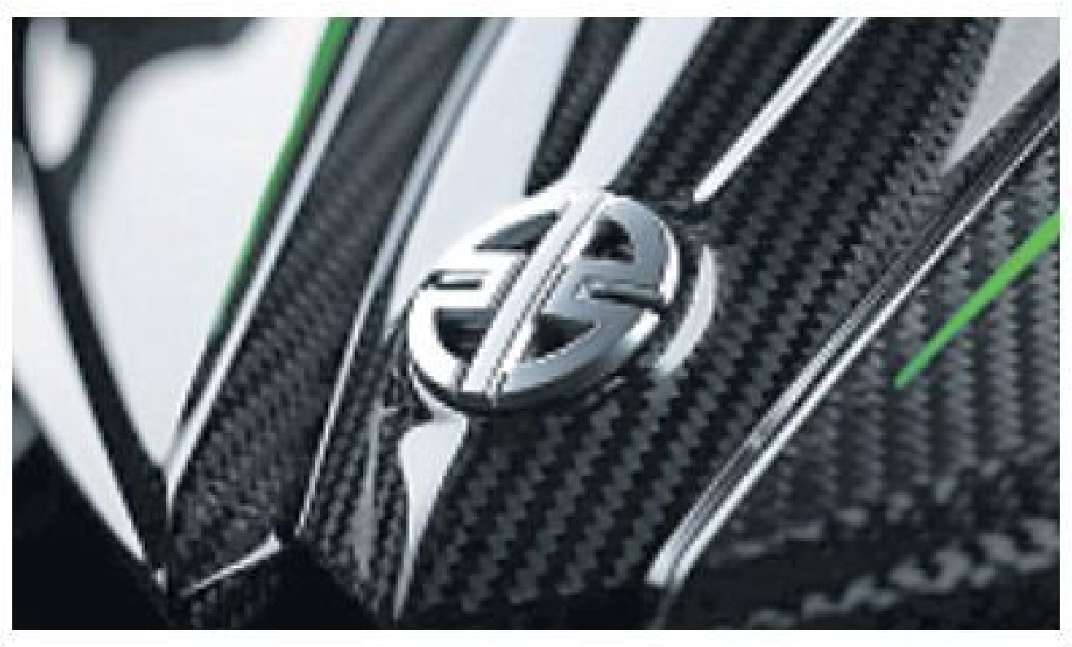
The Bavarian factory has just presented a full range of updated K1600s for 2022.

The changes aren't extensive for the newest version of the big tourers from BMW.

The K 1600, K 1600 GTL, K 1600 B and K 1600 Grand America get an updated six-cylinder 1649cc motor that's been tweaked to meet Euro 5 emissions regulations.

The power remains unchanged at 160hp, but it's now accessed lower down in the rev range, so you don't have to work the engine as hard to make the most out of it. There's a tiny bit more torque to play with too, increasing from 175Nm to 180Nm.

There's Dynamic ESA suspension as standard (which works to automatically adapt the set up to best suit the riding conditions and your riding style), while they all also get new LED headlights and a new colour display with an integrated navigation system.

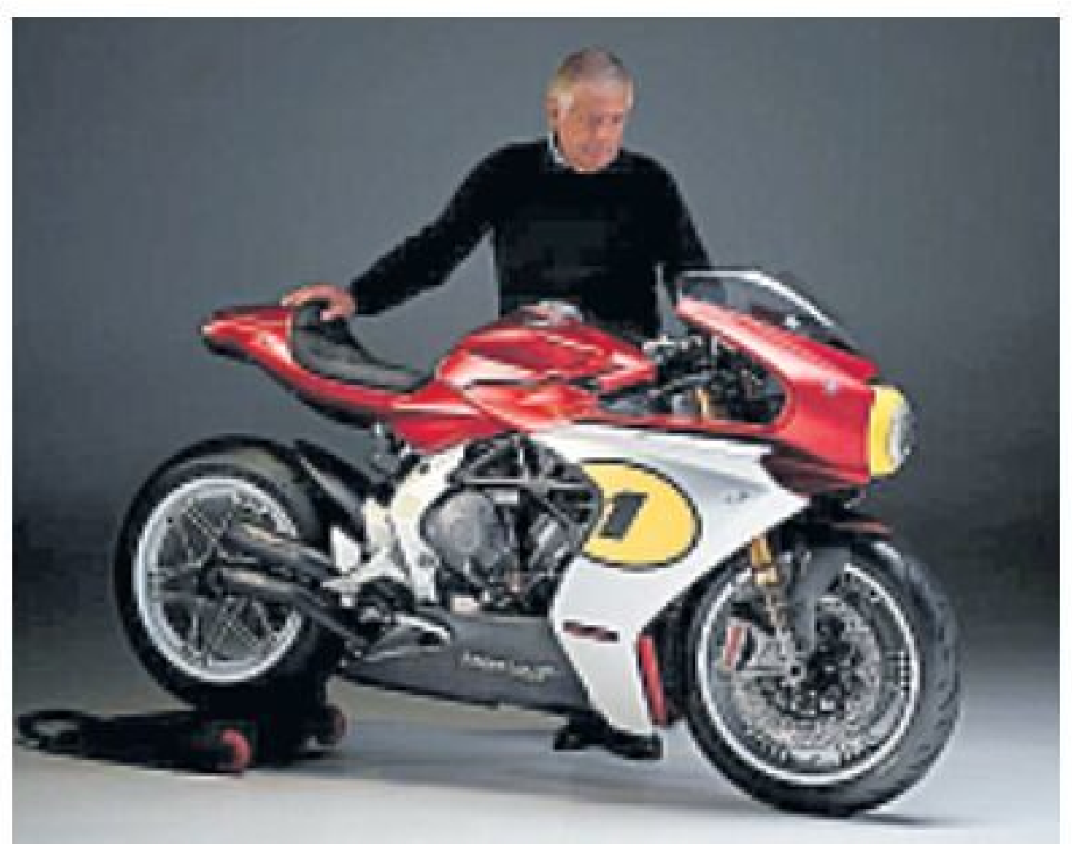


Kawasaki's new logo

The Japanese factory has just revealed a new logo – but you've probably seen it already.

Called the 'River Mark', the logo has actually already been featured on the supercharged Ninja H2 and H2R, but now Kawasaki has decided to roll it out across the rest of the range.

A representation of a Japanese ideogram depicting a river, the logo first appeared in 1870, when it was seen on the flags of ships owned by Kawasaki Tsukiji Shipyard (the Kawasaki Heavy Industries of the time). The logo fell from favour before returning to the forefront in 2015 when it appeared on the fairings of the Kawasaki Ninja H2 and Ninja H2R.



Ago MV revealed

MV Agusta has paid tribute to racing legend Giacomo Agostini with a special limited edition Superveloce.

The new MV Agusta Superveloce Ago will be built by hand, and in a fitting tribute to Agostini's 311 Grand Prix wins, only 311 will be built. In addition to some gorgeous carbon fibre bodywork, the Ago gets top-level Öhlins and a 3-into-1 Arrow exhaust.

There's been no news yet on UK pricing or availability.

MT-10 facelift reveal imminent

Leaked European registration documents confirm that Yamaha's preparing to release an updated version of its much-loved MT-10 naked sportbike for 2022.

It's no great surprise that the Japanese factory is about to reveal an updated version of the big MT, as it needs to make some changes to the motor to help it meet the Euro 5 emissions regulations which came into play at the start of 2021.

And while it's at it, Yamaha's also decided to up the power and give it a facelift. Why not?

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The Royal Enfield 'Himalayan GT 650' will arrive in 2024

The Indian motorcycle media has revealed the big Himalayan is on the way – but we'll have to wait quite a while to get our hands on it.

It feels like we've been talking about a bigger version of Royal Enfield's 411cc Himalayan forever. Ever since the back-to-basics adventure bike from India was released way back in 2016, there's been speculation and rumours about if and when a larger capacity version would make it to market. It seems like we've finally got our answer.

The Himalayan GT 650 (that's what we're going to call it for now until we hear otherwise from Royal Enfield) is back in the headlines of the Indian motorcycle media, and there's good and bad news. The good news is that we've been told to expect two unique versions of the bike. The bad news is that we're going to have to wait until 2024 for them to go into production.

It's a bit of a blow, as we were hoping that it'd be on view at the EICMA show in Milan in a few weeks' time, and being truly honest, we really can't see what's taking Royal Enfield so long. The engine already exists (it powers the much-loved Interceptor and Continental GT), even if it will need a bit of a tweak to meet Euro 5 emissions regulations. But then again, maybe it's a good thing. Maybe the wait is indicative of all the hard work the Indian factory is putting into the next evolution of its mid-sized adventure bike.

That's what's being suggested by journalists with an in at the factory, who reported that Royal Enfield has been working on the bigger, road-focused version of the Himalayan for a year-and-a-half already. Apparently the decision's been taken to make it a more dedicated road-going adventure bike because of the character of the existing engine. Enfield believes that it'd be difficult to retune and reconfigure the 650cc motor for off-road, without compromising it in some way. There's also talk that it might not even be called the Himalayan… but that's another conversation altogether.

Okay, so now you've hopefully come to terms with waiting until 2024, you'll probably be wondering what's going to be different about two versions of the bike. Well, the rumours suggest that one will come with sportier alloy wheels (and road-going tyres), while the other will come with spoked wheels and more off-road ready tyres. But chances are the off-road leaning one won't be quite so comfortable in the dirt as the current 'small' Himalayan.

There's some information being thrown around which probably gives the best indication as to what we can expect. It's expected that the 21-inch front wheel of the current Himalayan will be swapped for a 19-inch one, the seat will be higher and the ground clearance will increase, too. The exhaust will be mounted higher, the brakes will be improved, there will be an electronics package and a selection of riding modes, and traction control as standard. And there's likely to be a TFT screen and Bluetooth as standard, too.

We're just going to have to sit tight for another couple of years and keeping bringing you the information as we get it, but it does seem like we're getting closer to the 'big' Himalayan becoming a reality (even if it is a way off in the future).

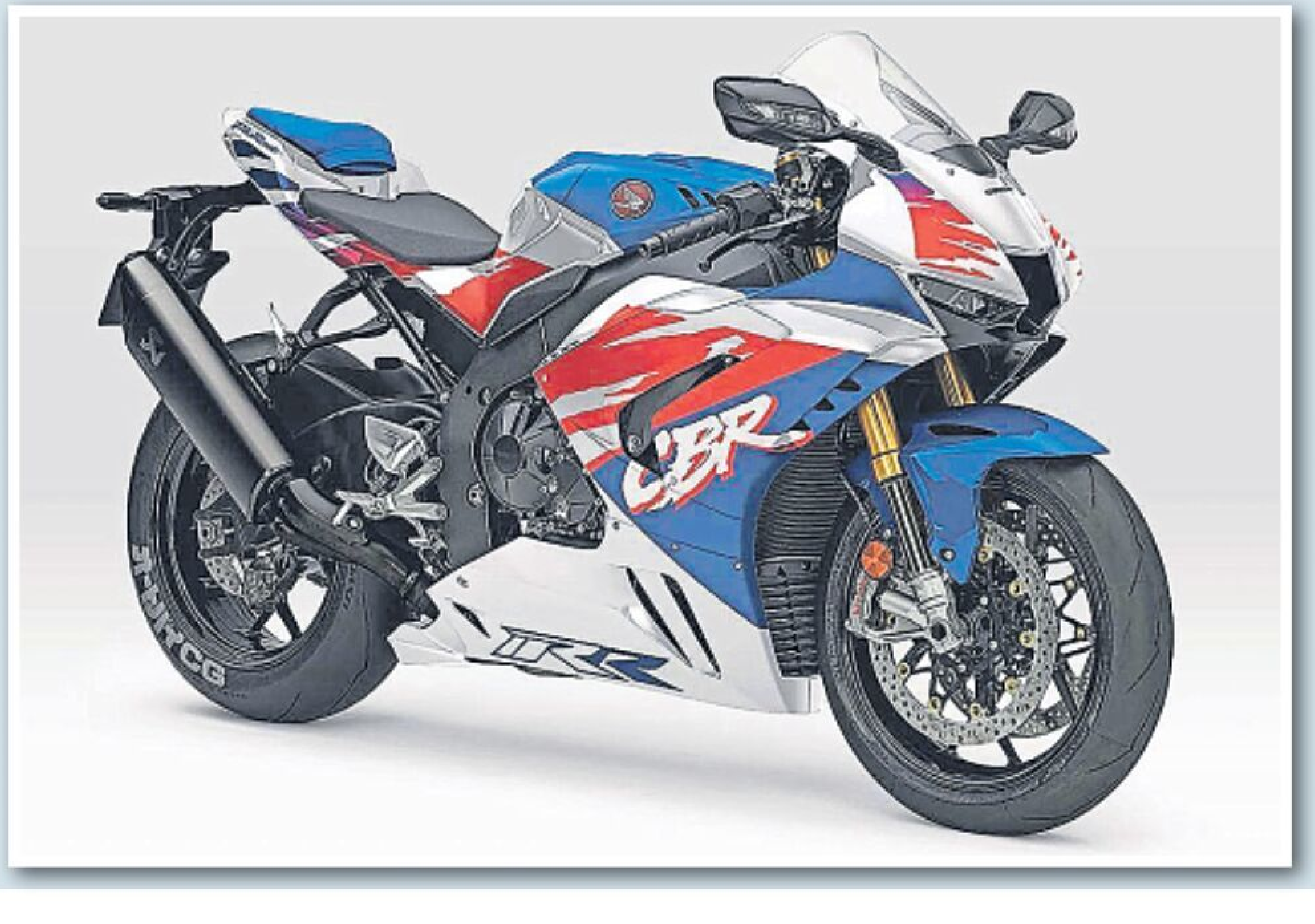
Rumours of a 30th Anniversary CBR1000RR-R

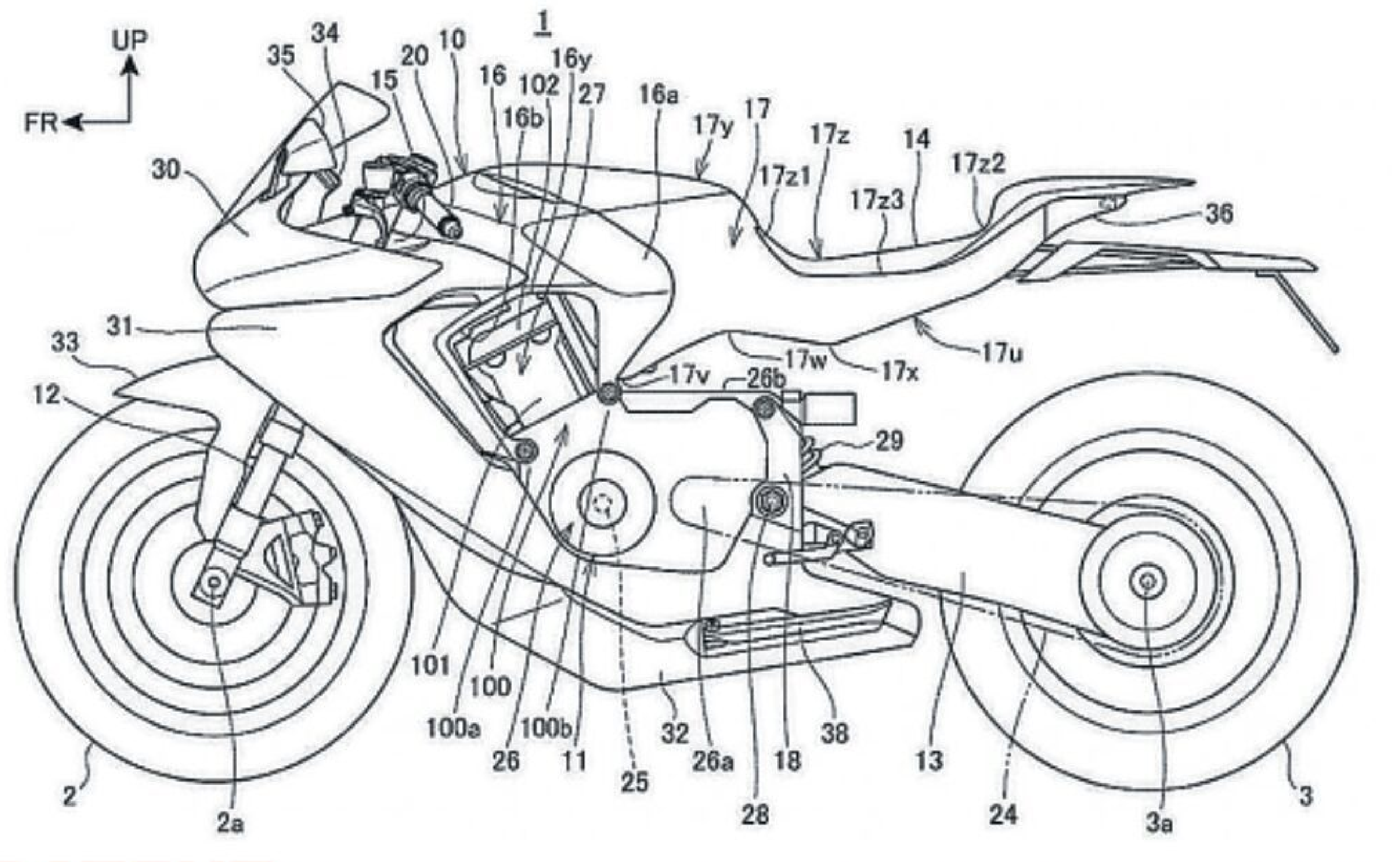
Direct from Japan comes the news that Honda could be preparing to celebrate 30 years of the Fireblade with a trick version of its current CBR1000RR-R.

This one's all rumours and speculation, but with Honda preparing to celebrate 30 years of the Fireblade in 2022, it's not too much of a stretch to imagine the Japanese factory revealing a special-edition version of its flagship sportbike.

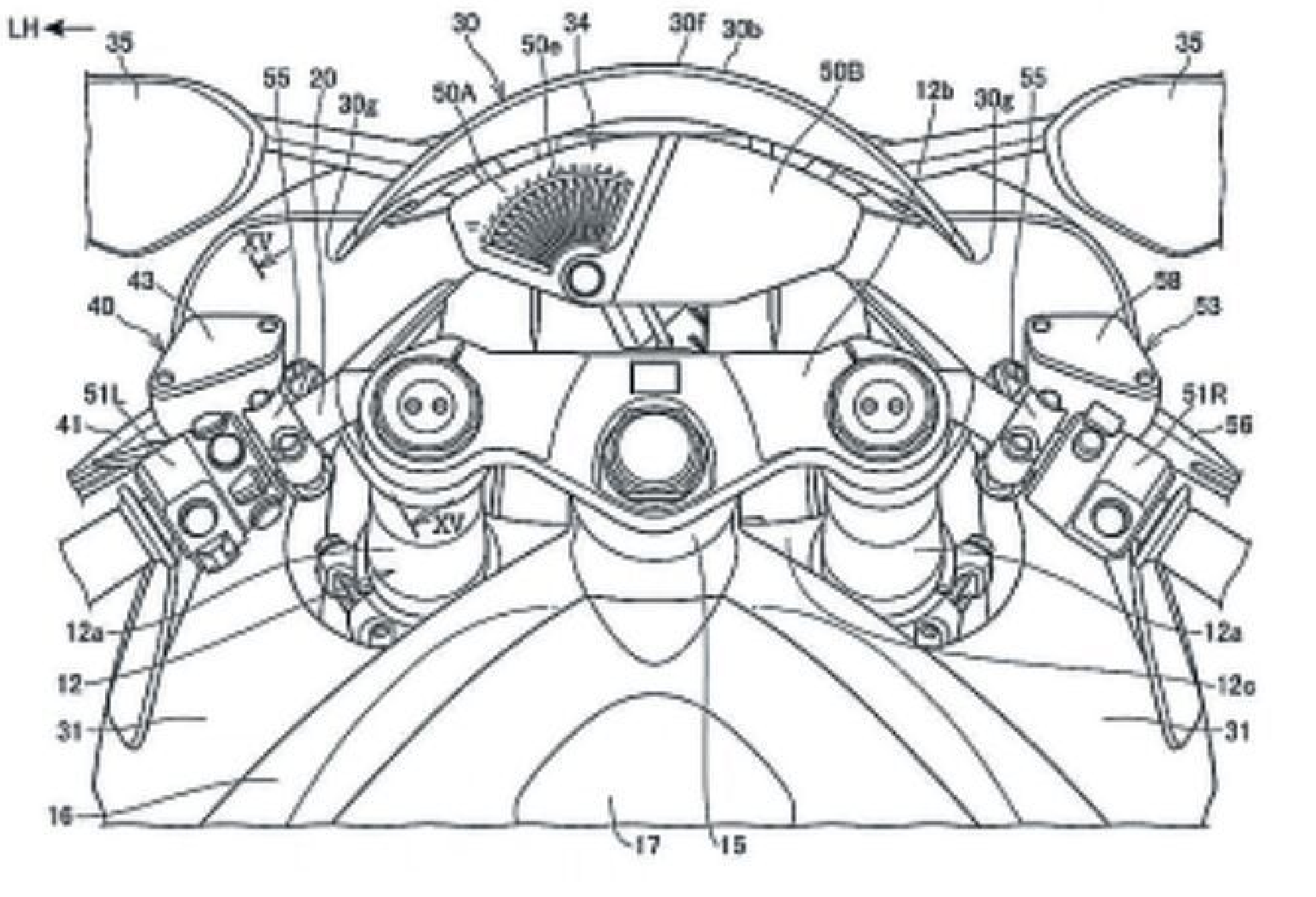
When the first generation CBR900R Fireblade went on sale way back in 1992, it shook the motorcycling world with its innovative and comparatively lightweight design. Ever since, the Fireblade has been widely regarded as one of the best sportbikes in the game.

That's why it would come as no surprise that Honda's gearing up to mark the 30-year anniversary of one of its most influential models. That's what the Japanese motorcycle media reckons is about to happen, and to prepare us for what we've got to look forward to, Autoby has created a render which sees the current CBR1000RR-R repainted with a slightly reimagined version of the red, white and blue livery from 1992.





PATENT: Is a new Honda CBR1000RR Fireblade on the way?



The Japanese manufacturer has just filed patents for a sportbike – and everything seems to suggest that it'll be the basis for a new CBR1000RR.

The chances are this won't be coming anytime soon. Honda's released a new Fireblade relatively recently. But that doesn't mean the factory isn't thinking about the next generation as it continues to chase success and sales in the ever-competitive superbike market.

The patents show a range of innovations that help make it stand out from the current flagship Fireblade. There's a new frame which relies on the engine as a load-bearing element, while what looks like a single-sided swingarm takes pride of place at the rear. Both changes would make logical sense, with weight saving the name of the game. There're also patents for a swanky new instrument panel with both analogue and digital elements sharing space.

There's been no official word from Honda and there're no technical details to accompany the design drawings, but looking at the patents it seems that there're some big changes coming for the next-generation CBR1000RR.

Chances are we'll be waiting until next year at the very least before we see the bike rolling out of dealers (and on to racetracks).

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NEW GSX-S1000GT

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Superbike derived performance paired with the latest technology and all-day comfort allows the new GSX-S1000GT to deliver next level sports touring experience for both rider and pillion.

The thrilling 152PS, torque-rich powerplant and seamless quickshifter is just the start. A comfortable yet dynamic chassis, hard-luggage capability and cruise control mean that miles of breathtaking roads are covered with ease. All this is combined with striking looks, a premium finish and a 6.5" colour TFT display with smartphone connectivity to round off the perfect machine for your next journey.

PERFORMANCE | DISTANCE | CONNECTION

Model shown with optional hard-luggage.

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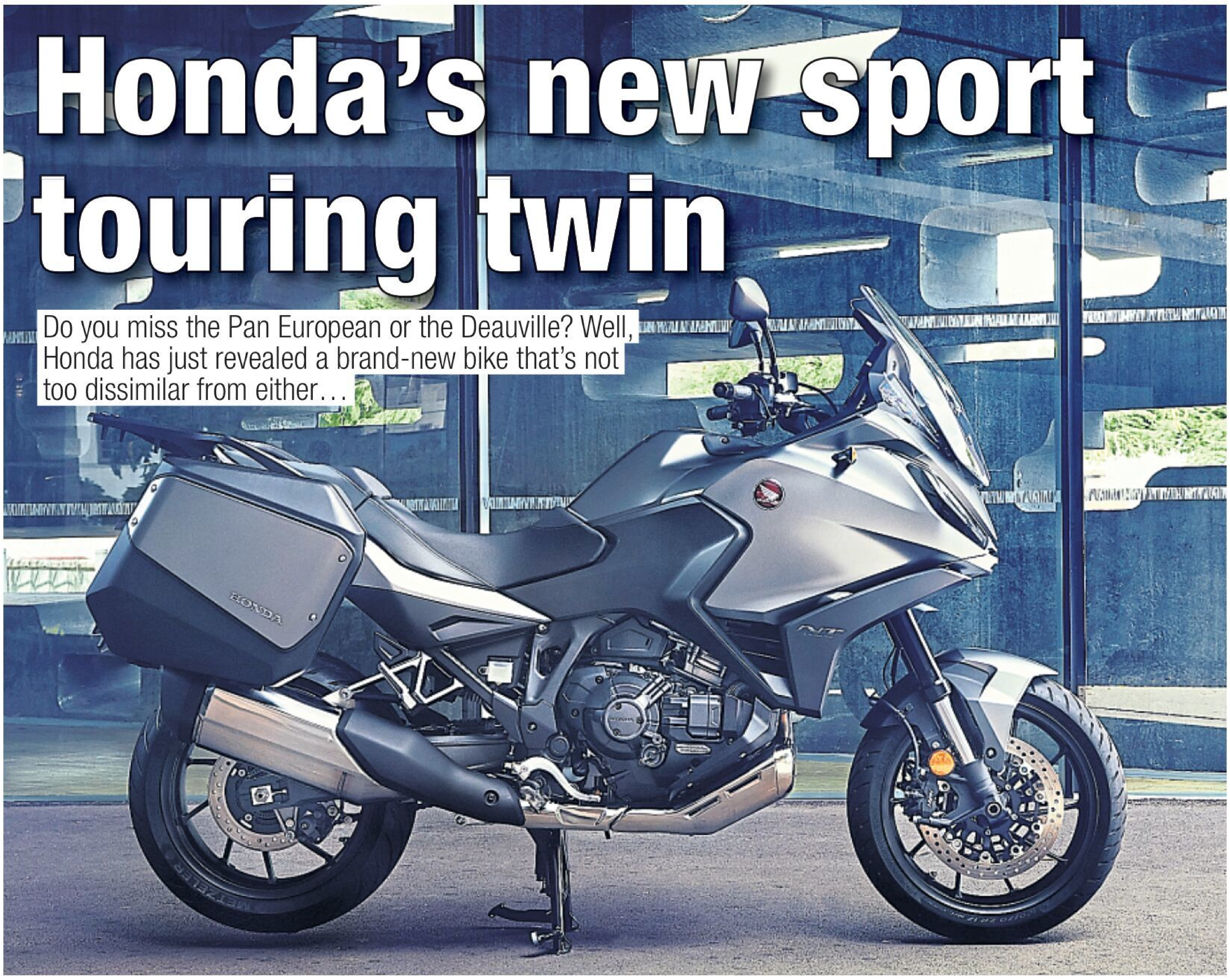
Honda's new sport touring twin



Do you miss the Pan European or the Deauville? Well, Honda has just revealed a brand-new bike that's not too dissimilar from either…

Dual Clutch Transmission

TECH SPEC

Honda NT11000

Engine: 1084cc parallel twin with 270° crank and uni-cam
Power: 100bhp (75kW) @ 7500rpm
Torque: 77lb-ft (104Nm) @ 6250rpm
Fuel tank: 20.4 litres (4.5 gallons)
Fuel consumption: Claimed 56.5mpg (20km/l)
Transmission: MT: 6-speed manual transmission / DCT: 6-speed Dual Clutch Transmission. Chain final drive
Frame: Steel semi double cradle
Seat height: 820mm (32.3in)
Kerb Weight: MT 238Kg, DCT 248Kg
Suspension: (F) Showa 43mm SFF-BP USD fork with preload adjuster, 150mm stroke. (R) Monoblock aluminium swing arm with Pro-Link with SHOWA gas-charged damper, preload adjuster, 150mm axle travel.
Wheels/tyres: Multi-spoke cast aluminium / (F) 120/70R17 M/C, (R) 180/55R17 M/C
Brakes: (F) Radial mounted four-piston calipers, 310mm floating discs, (R) Single piston caliper, 256mm single disc. 2-channel ABS
Contact: www.honda.co.uk/motorcycles

Adventure bikes have been all the rage for the last few years, but their popularity has left a gap in the market as tourers have been overlooked.

In Honda's case the gap in its line-up may be its own doing – no VFRs, no Pan Europeans and no Deauvilles in the range any more; in fact, there's no touring machine smaller than the Goldwing. This gap is one that the big H needed to plug.

And here is the plug: the NT1100, a new sporty(-ish) tourer based on the 1100cc parallel twin engine and steel frame from the Africa Twin.

As you'd expect, a lot around the basic blocks has been changed for a more touring-biased feel. For starters, the suspension is lower and more road-oriented, tyres are both 17-inch, and weather protection has been beefed up. All to make the NT easier to live with on big journeys as well as everyday use. And the lower 820mm seat height will be appreciated by many riders.

Styling is classic Honda, with subtle and smooth shaping around the bike. Screen height and angle are five-way adjustable, and upper and lower wind deflectors help protect the rider. A 6.5-inch TFT touch screen can run Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity. Cruise control, heated grips and integrated panniers are standard equipment.

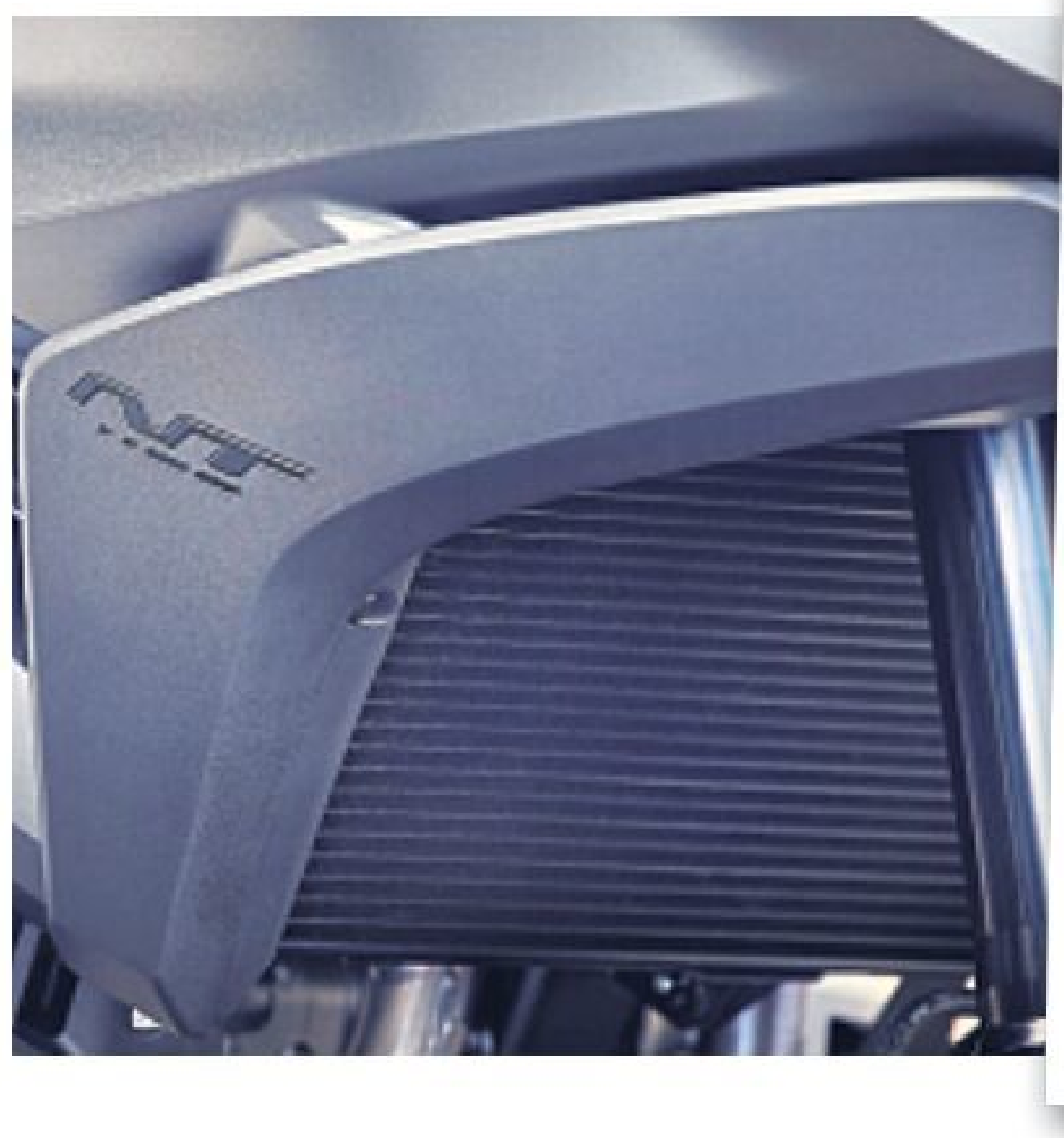
The engine is the same unit as on the Africa Twin, but the intake and exhaust have been tinkered with for added smoothness.

The electronic package includes three default riding modes; two user customisable riding modes; three-level torque control (traction control); wheelie control; full LED lights; self-cancelling indicators; and emergency stop signals. As is the case with all of Honda's big guns, the six-speed Dual Clutch Transmission (DCT) is an option.

There are a range of accessories ready for the NT1100, including quickshifter with autoblipper function; 50L top box with inner bag; 4.5-litre tank bag; comfort seats and pegs; as well as foglights.

The NT1100 will be available in grey, white or black from early 2022. OTR price for the manual transmission NT1100 will be £11,999 and the DCT model will be £12,999.

We will be test riding the bike very soon, so keep your eyes peeled if you like what you have seen here.



Triumph's NEW Gold Line Editions

Showcasing the hand-painted gold lining skills of Triumph's expert paint shop and reflecting customer demand for brighter and more custom-inspired schemes, the new Bonneville Gold Line Editions bring a unique style and some hand-painted details to eight motorcycles in Triumph's extensive Modern Classic range.

Following the success of the Street Twin Gold Line Edition launched earlier in 2021, the new range of eight Bonneville Gold Line Editions takes the latest generation models and adds hand-painted 'gold line' colour schemes to each.

The Bonneville Gold Line Editions include: T100, Street Scrambler, Speedmaster, Bobber, T120 Gold, T120 Black, Scrambler 1200 XC and 1200 XE.

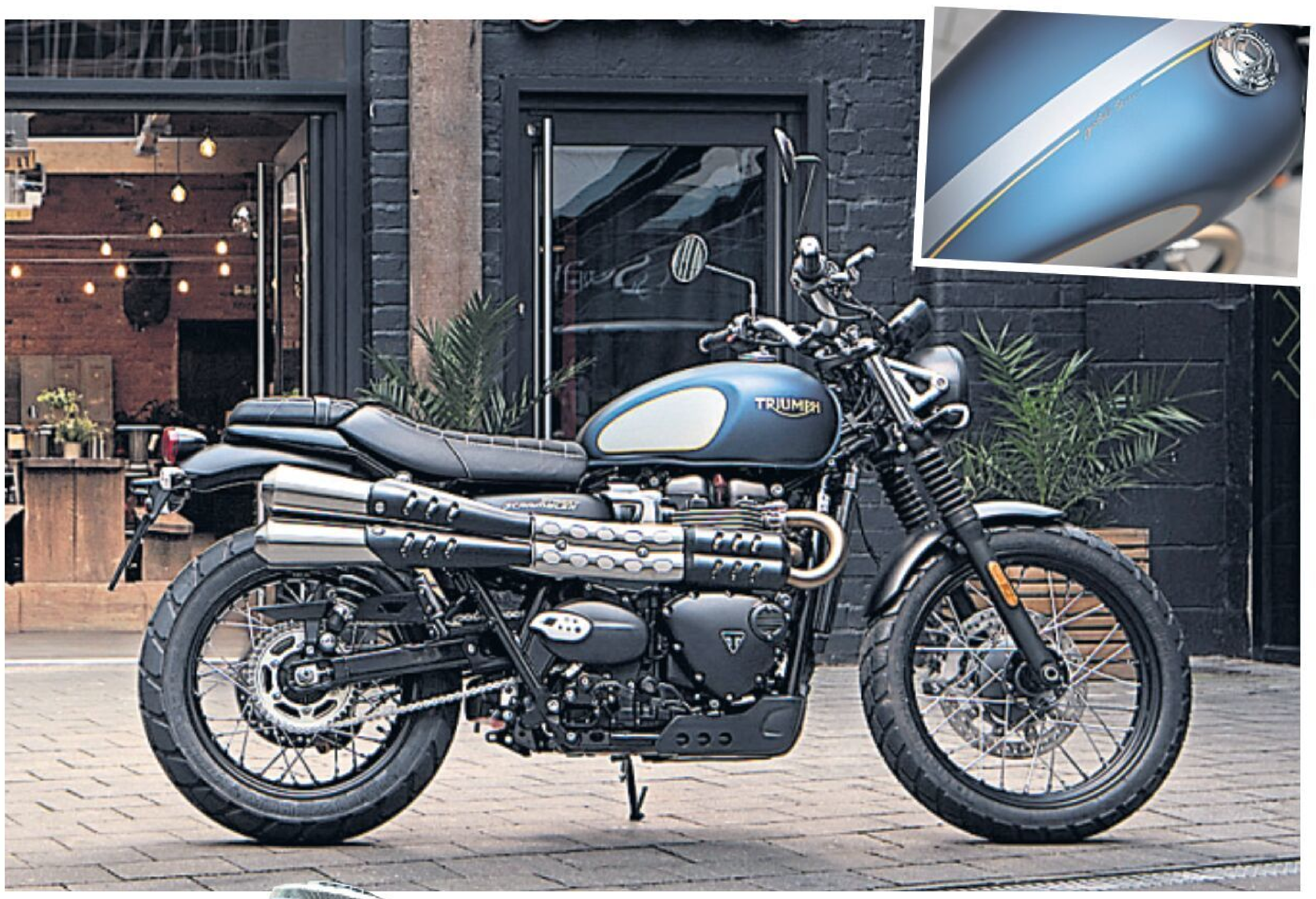
Let's focus on the Street Scrambler to give you a flavour for the Gold Line Editions. Triumph's stylish and accessible urban Street Scrambler is powered by the latest generation Euro 5 compliant high torque 900cc twin engine, with a unique Scrambler tune. It delivers strong power and torque exactly where you need it, with 65PS peak power at 7,250rpm and 80Nm peak torque at 3,250rpm.

We've spent some time on the Street Scrambler and it's comfortable, fun and really intuitive to ride, with high-specification cartridge forks and preload-adjustable twin rear shocks, wire-spoked wheels with Metzeler Tourance tyres, and a Brembo front brake with switchable ABS.

The Gold Line Edition adds to the Street Scrambler's premium custom style and detailing, with a special Matt Pacific Blue scheme that perfectly suits the bike's urban attitude and rugged style. The rich blue of the tank beautifully contrasts with the Graphite tank stripe and brushed foil knee pad graphics, both of which have accompanying hand-painted gold lining. The Triumph tank logo echoes that same gold.

The mudguards are finished in a premium Matt Jet Black, as is the side panel, which features a new gold Street Scrambler logo. There's also an accessory fit Matt Pacific Blue flyscreen and a high-level mudguard.

If you're interested in finding out more specific information about the full range of limited edition Gold Line Triumphs, visit: www.triumphmotorcycles.co.uk



HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

- Bonneville T100 Gold Line Edition – from £9,900, available from December
- Street Scrambler Gold Line Edition – from £10,100, available from December
- Bonneville Speedmaster Gold Line Edition – from £12,900, available from December
- Bonneville Bobber Gold Line Edition – from £12,900, available from December
- Bonneville T120 Gold Line Edition – from £11,800, available from December
- Bonneville T120 Black Gold Line Edition – from £11,800, available from December
- Scrambler 1200 XC Gold Line Edition – from £12,800, available from December
- Scrambler 1200 XE Gold Line Edition – from £13,650, available from December

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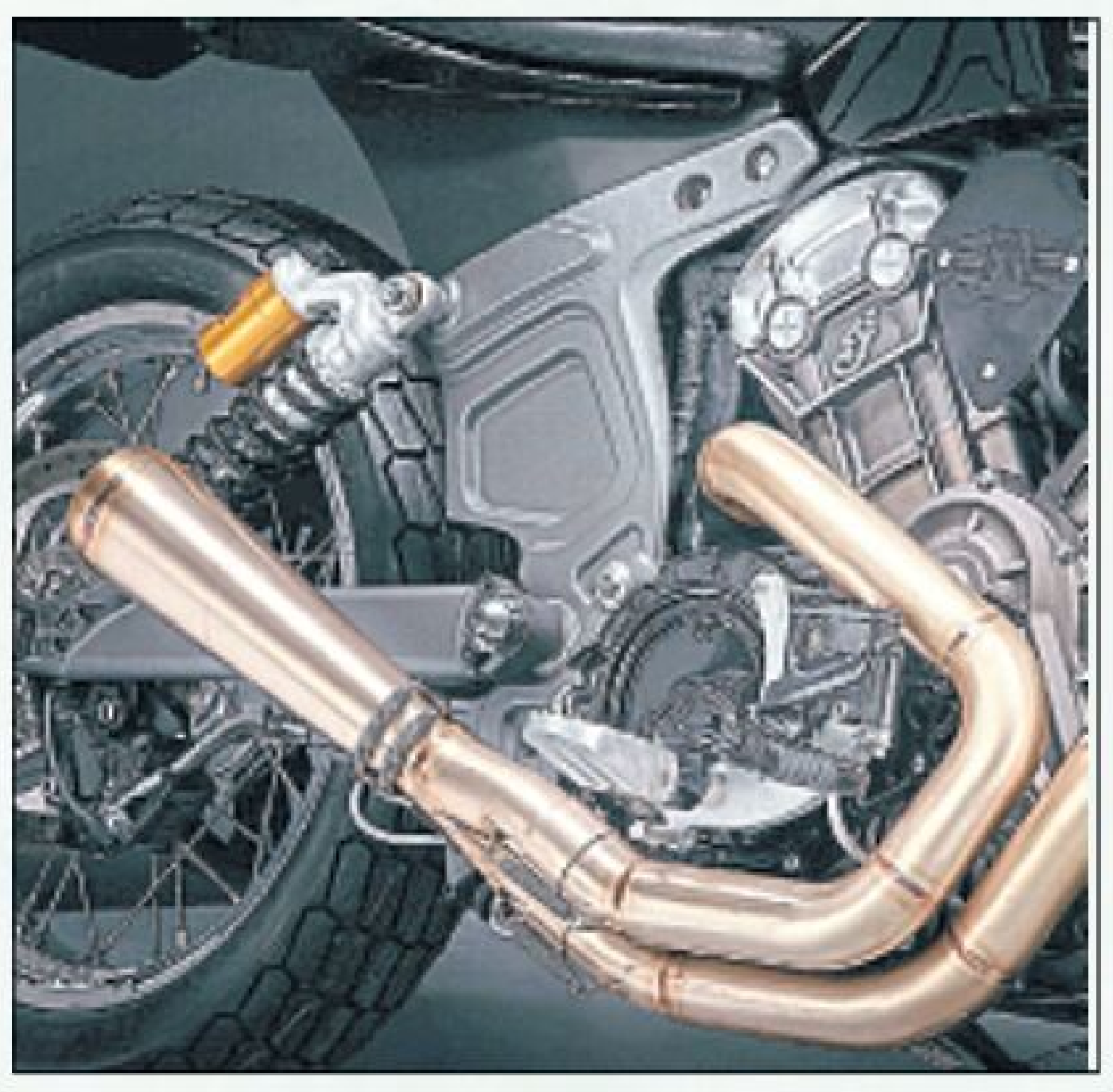
NO MORE MODS?

Ever since the very first motorcycle was built over 120 years ago, bikers have been customising their rides. Is that all about to change?

WORDS: Dave Manning



Towards the end of the 20th Century, there was a move by the European Commission to regulate any modifications made to motorcycles, with a huge backlash resulting in massive demonstrations throughout Europe, culminating in the 'Euro Demos' held in Paris, Brussels and Bonn, with the end result being that we have been allowed to continue making pretty much any changes we want to our machines. One of the exceptions is Germany, who still have their TÜV (Technischer Überwachungsverein) laws that restrict modifications to the owner using parts that have been homologated for use, and must carry the paper to prove so at all times.

After the success of the Euro Demos, most British motorcyclists thought we were safe from any kind of draconian legislation that may impinge on our wants and desires to modify our bikes. Until this year.

During a conversation between Bill Wiggin MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Motorcycling, and the Minister for the Department of Transport, Trudy Harrison, it was mentioned that the Government would be creating new regulations regarding 'sub-standard replacement parts and to tackle tampering of safety or environmentally critical motorcycle components.'

Of course, as we all know as motorcyclists, a standard bike isn't necessarily perfect for everyone – it's one of the reasons why there are so many different models on the market – and the ability to tweak and change a bike to suit its desired use and to fit its owner is not only desirable, but also pretty bloody important. Changing handlebars, seats, footpegs, mirrors and controls to make the bike more comfortable is a useful trait, as is being able to fit aftermarket luggage, or crash protection. This can be as basic as it sounds, or more encompassing, as it'll take a little more effort, thought and devotion to modify a bike for international touring, enduros, long-distance trials, or even delivering pizzas. Of course, many people take customising far beyond the practicalities as they want a bike that stands out from the crowd, and is very different from a production machine, and this isn't really easy to explain to a person who doesn't understand the concept of standing out from the crowd...

And what of bikes that are built to a budget, that need a few tweaks in the suspension or braking department? Or a fettle of the fuel injection, fitting an aftermarket air filter or modified exhaust to make them more efficient outside of the very limited range in which they're tested (yes, modifying a bike can make it better for the environment)? And, for most new bikes, the standard factory-fitted tyres aren't always the best that are available, yet this legislation would mean that you wouldn't be able to improve the handling, braking, fuel efficiency or tyre life by swapping to a better type of rubber.

The potential anti-modifying laws are over and above the regulations that are set to bring in speed limiters on new bikes (which is a contentious subject on its own), and the standard fitment of transponders to each and every vehicle that will not only 'talk to' the autonomous vehicles that are set to be joining us on the roads very soon (yes, driverless delivery vehicles, taxis, etc., are just around the corner) but also record where we how, and how fast we go there. If you're not scared by this, then we must assume that you work for the Government...

Not worried by any of this? Well, we've all heard of motorcyclists being stopped by the Police for having a loud exhaust or a small number plate. These prospective rules will mean that you could be stopped, and fined, for having a comfy seat. Or better brakes. Or stickier tyres. Or mirrors that show more than your elbows...

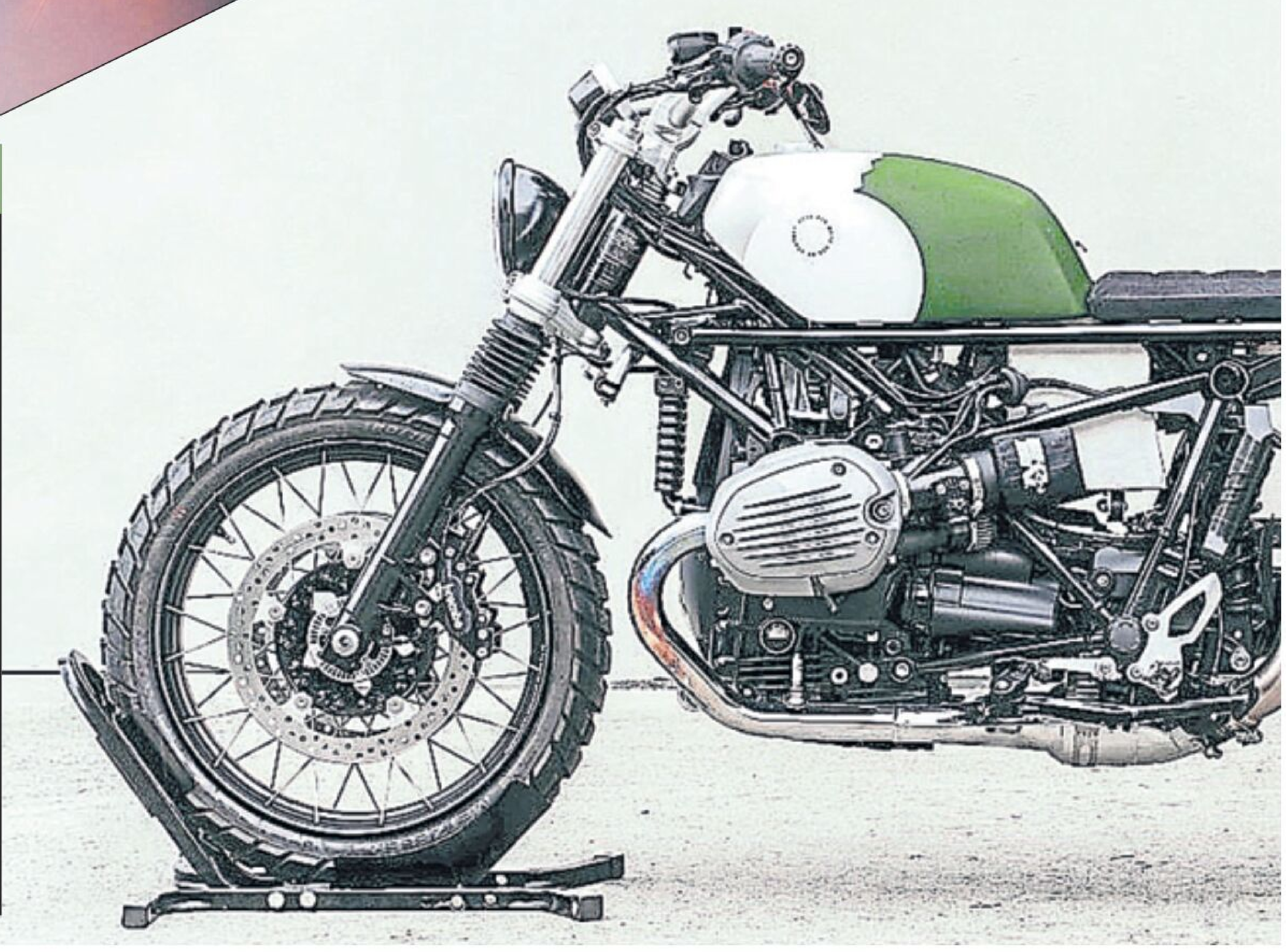
Or you may feel that this simply won't affect you as the legislation is only set to affect bikes built after a certain date, but it's not unheard of for restrospective legislation to be put in place and, even if that doesn't happen, you'll want to be changing your bike at some point in the future... when it comes to replacing the tyres, chain, brake pads, or the exhaust when it rusts through, or repair any damage from a spill, then you'll have to use original equipment parts that will be horrifically expensive and may not be up to the standard of aftermarket parts.

The side-effect here is that because alternative aftermarket parts will be banned from sale, many motorcycle-oriented businesses will fail. Walk into any bike dealers and take a look at the number of aftermarket parts they have for sale, all of which help to keep the business afloat. Then think of the companies that are making bespoke parts for custom builds. Lots of people will lose their livelihoods, and owning and running a motorcycle will become a lot more expensive and a lot more difficult, logistically speaking. If your local bike shop closes, where will you get your service and MoT done?

And, when that bike that has to have OEM parts fitted gets to a certain age, it'll not be possible (financially or literally) to get those spare parts, and bikes will end up being scrapped far earlier than they are now. Not especially environmentally friendly that, is it?

But that legislation isn't quite in the system as yet, and the Government has a consultation form online. This is a legal obligation and also gauges the public opinion on the subject in question. However, rather than have the usual 12-week consultation period, this one is lasting for just eight weeks, and the Government is being very quiet about it, as it clearly doesn't want the disagreeable comments being raised by any member of the public who fills in that consultation form. It needs to be done, right now!

The more people who object to the proposals, then the less likely they are to implement them, at least in their current form, although past history shows that it will still rear its ugly head in the future, albeit in a watered-down form.



Get involved

The consultation document was published online on September 28, so we have just enough time to respond to it. You can find it at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ETVHG5/ and if you want to know more about the Government's intentions (although it are being a little wishy-washy in making any direct statements) then look at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-transport-regulatory-review-modernising-vehicle-standards

If you're not the sort of person to fill in forms online, or to write to your Member of Parliament, or even the Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, then you can help by supporting the work of any of the National Motorcyclists Council members. They are: the Auto Cycle Union (www.acu.org.uk), British Motorcyclists Federation (www.bmf.co.uk), IAM RoadSmart (www.iamroadsmart.com), Motorcycle Action Group (www.mag-uk.org), National Motorcycle Dealers Association (www.rmif.co.uk/en/nmda), and Trail Riders Fellowship (www.trf.org.uk).

MoreBikes you LIKE

We love to see what you lot are riding – and we know the rest of you like it, too. It's just like pottering around a bike night and checking out what's been brought out for a ride. Now we've decided to bring the bike night to you, asking readers to send us photos of their pride and joy for the world to see. Here're some of our top picks from the last month.

Nicholas Jones' Royal Enfield Himalayan resting on the seafront, looking every inch the adventurer.

Jodi Marie has only had her full licence a few months, but here she is in the Brecon Beacons on her Kawasaki Z650, on the day she passed her Mod 2 test.

Dawn Bramley on her Triumph Daytona 675.

Paul Smith's 1978 RD250E in Jersey. He'd forgotten how addictive it is to chase the revs and find the power band.

Tony Jones' Kawasaki H2 SX SE soaks up some sunshine.

Melanie Dicks loves to get out and about in the Welsh countryside on her Suzuki GSX1400.

Donna Campbell's 2011 Harley-Davidson XL883L Superlow taking in the scenery at Ayr Beach

Mike Nunn's Triumph Tiger Explorer in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

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Alexandra Dlustus loves her Kawasaki Z1000.

James McPake's GSXR750M at Loch Droma. He's just got the bike back on the road after a six-month restoration (it'd been sat in a shed for five years!).

Siobhan McNeil's Yamaha Fazer by the sea.

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MoreBikes LADIES WHO RIDE

Biking is often seen as a bit of a bloke-y pastime, but we all know that's not the case. More women than ever before are getting on two wheels, but sometimes the pages of this paper are missing a bit more of a feminine touch. That's why we've decided to introduce a new section that's dedicated to showcasing some of the wonderful women who love motorcycles as much as anyone. We'll be changing things up on a regular basis, but for this month we're introducing you to some of our regular readers.

Marta Freire

Age: 29
Job: Project Manager

How long have you been riding?

Eight years

Bikes

A 2019 Triumph Bonneville Street Twin and sometimes I ride my partner's 2018 BMW R1200RS (I've also got a 1998 Suzuki TU250X and a 1977 Suzuki RV125 over in Portugal).

How did you get into bikes?

My uncle had a classic AJS 500 Twin from 1954 and there were also two 70s Suzuki Van Vans in the family. I guess I was always fascinated but not really allowed to go on bikes until I had my licence. Once I was able to get my first bike (a Kawasaki ZZR400) then the doors had opened and freedom to go anywhere arrived! I absolutely loved my first proper adventure with my first bike.

Where do you like to ride?

I have been quite fortunate to live relatively near the countryside and I like to research what to explore next; roads matter (the quality of tarmac and type of scenery) and if there is some archaeological site nearby, even better. I really like to learn about the different cultures and populations which have lived in the UK. History helps to understand culture and appreciate some architectural features. I like to learn.

One of my go-to rides is to Tintern, Usk, going around Monmouthshire as there are quite nice roads and pretty spots. There is also Cheddar Gorge and the lovely roads around the Cotswolds. I can go alone or with friends, depending on availabilities or how much time I have for it. Bristol also has some hidden gems and the last lockdowns have definitely helped me to find a few more local spots.

What's on your biker bucket list?

I have done a few European trips and I also have taken a bike from Bristol to Lisbon, but I certainly would like to have some more time to see more of Europe on two wheels or even further.

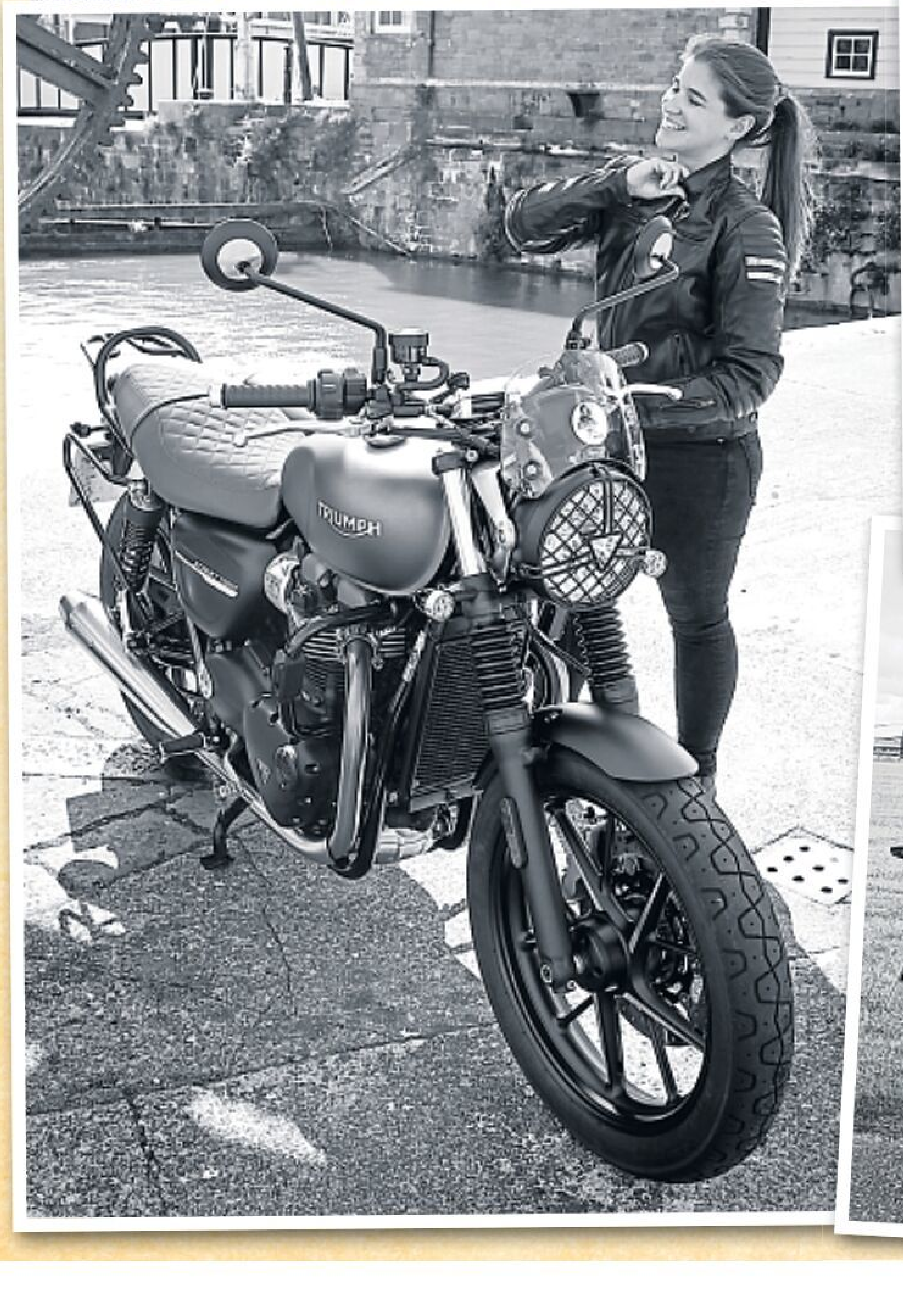
I have plans to do the Pyrenees, but likewise ride all the way to Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania and Greece; might have to do them in separate chunks or maybe an opportunity will come. I am open to see how I can make it work to explore more.

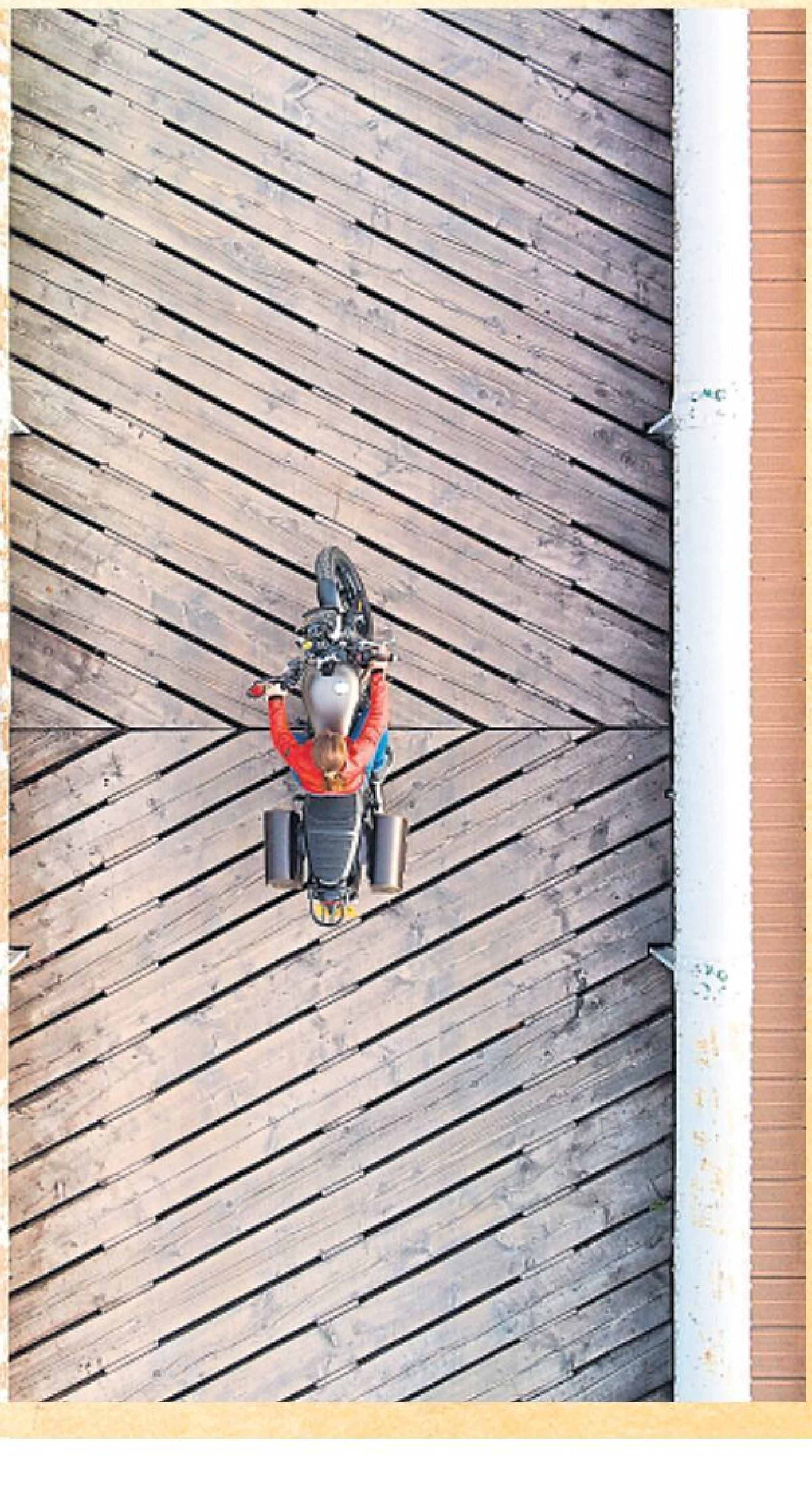
Morocco is also somewhere I would love to ride but I think for me it is more a question of planning and doing them as I go along.

As I speak Portuguese and Spanish, South America is obviously somewhere to try and explore on two wheels.

I do like to share my knowledge about bikes and the female perspective, so I took the punt and organised the Petrolettes Rally in Bristol for 2020 and 2021.

We have won an award already and I am looking at making sure the event gets better and better every year. If you're interested, you should check out the Petrolettes website.





The *MB* legal column is compiled by managing partner Andrew 'Chef' Prendergast and his bike-riding barristers and solicitors at White Dalton Motorcycle Solicitors.

The firm deals with personal injury claims and its sister company, Motor Defence Solicitors, deals with all the motoring offences. White Dalton lawyers have a vast knowledge of bike law, and they have full bike licences, too. They don't act for insurance companies or the prosecution. White Dalton is Britain's premier specialist motorcycle law practice, and if its professionals don't know the answer to your question, there probably isn't one. Don't rely on the advice from your insurance-appointed solicitor, get proper independent advice.

For road traffic offences, call the Motor Defence solicitors on 0800 280 0912.

For non-offence cases, call White Dalton motorcycle solicitors on 0800 783 6191.

Need advice

If you need advice on a biking-related legal question or query, email mail@whitedalton.co.uk. The best Q&A will be published in *MB*, in confidence, of course.

Q&A

Our specialist motoring solicitor Andrew Prendergast guides readers through their legal trials and troubles

Q I met my girlfriend last summer through some mutual biking friends. We had all been for a ride out to the Peak District for lunch and the rest as they say is history. We just hit it off. Since then we've barely been apart and she's covered thousands of miles with me on my trusty Triumph Daytona T595 and her riding a Honda CB650r.

She's a genuinely lovely woman and kindly insured me on her bike a couple of months ago. The problem I have is I got clocked speeding doing 37mph in a 30mph limit. She now has a Notice of Intended Prosecution and has been asked to identify the rider.

However, I never told her I only had a provisional licence and she got me insured on the basis I had a full licence. I didn't think it would matter as I only used her bike on the odd occasion when mine was out of action or hers was nearer the front of the garage. She has gone bonkers now she has found out. What can I do to get out of this? Her (adult) kids don't like me as it is since I moved in with her.

A It appears the gene pool is missing a lifeguard. I feel sorry for your girlfriend, to be blunt. By trusting you, she now has unnecessary grief to deal with. If she ignores the request for driver information, she will likely be summonsed for failing to give information. This carries a punishment of six penalty points and a fine of up to £1,000. If she does identify you as the rider, you may get offered a fixed penalty offer. If you accept a fixed penalty offer, then that may be the end of the matter, if you are very lucky. However, I cannot guarantee the Police will not 'join up the dots' and discover you only had a provisional licence.

In this scenario you could get summonsed for other offences such as riding otherwise in accordance with a licence and/or riding without insurance. Further, in this scenario your girlfriend could be summonsed for letting you ride without insurance.

My advice is don't flag up the issue with the Police and make a decision when you know what is going to happen. Oh, and get a full licence like you are meant to.

Q Some old moron pulled out of a side road to my left and straight into me, smashing my left leg and ankle to bits. I am about to have my third surgery to fit an ilizarov external fixator, i.e. a big medieval-looking frame. I am kacking it. Thereafter, as a best guess, my surgeon reckons I've got at least a year of physiotherapy and rehabilitation. Hoorah! I can't wait (Yes, you can hear the sarcasm I'm sure...).

What I can't understand is the Police have been about as much use as a handbrake on a canoe. They have told me they are not prosecuting the car driver because he is 87. My view is they should book him on a one-way trip to Switzerland. However, I accept I am not judge, jury and executioner, but surely he should be prosecuted? What can I do?

A From a purist's perspective, the Police's jobis not to decide whether the 'old moron' should be prosecuted, but to gather the evidence. Thereafter, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) makes the decision whether to prosecute. When making a decision whether to prosecute the CPS should look at The Code for Crown Prosecutors. There are two main considerations:

1. Is there enough evidence against the defendant?

2. Is it in the public interest for the CPS to bring the case to court?

If you want the driver considered for prosecution, I would read the guide and then write to the Police with your reasons and ask for the matter to be reviewed with a view to prosecution and go from there. I genuinely cannot say whether they will prosecute or not, but if you do not doing nothing it won't help get what you want.

For more info, go to:

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November 2021 – Issue #185

Last Month's Answers:

Across
1 & 4 & 6 Honda Africa Twin, **8** TZR, **9** Nac, **10** Discount, **12** Shoei, **14** Valentino, **15** Ewan, **16** Imre, **18** Brookes, **21** Ankle, **22** Rebound, **24** Speed Up, **26** Furygan, **29** V-Max, **30** Spec, **31** Insurance, **33** Aleix, **35** Inflated, **36** Fonsi, **37** ART, **38** Grip, **39** Cotton

Down
1 & 26 Handlebar Festival, **2** Nicolas, **3** ATK, **4** Arch, **5** India, **6** Two Strokes, **7** Nations, **11** Steer, **13** Evel Knievel, **17** Mladin, **18** Bestia, **19** ECU, **20** Joey Dunlop, **23 & 40 Across** Eau Rouge, **25** Porcupine, **27** Adapt, **28** Spain, **32** Cadet, **34** Izan, **36** FTR

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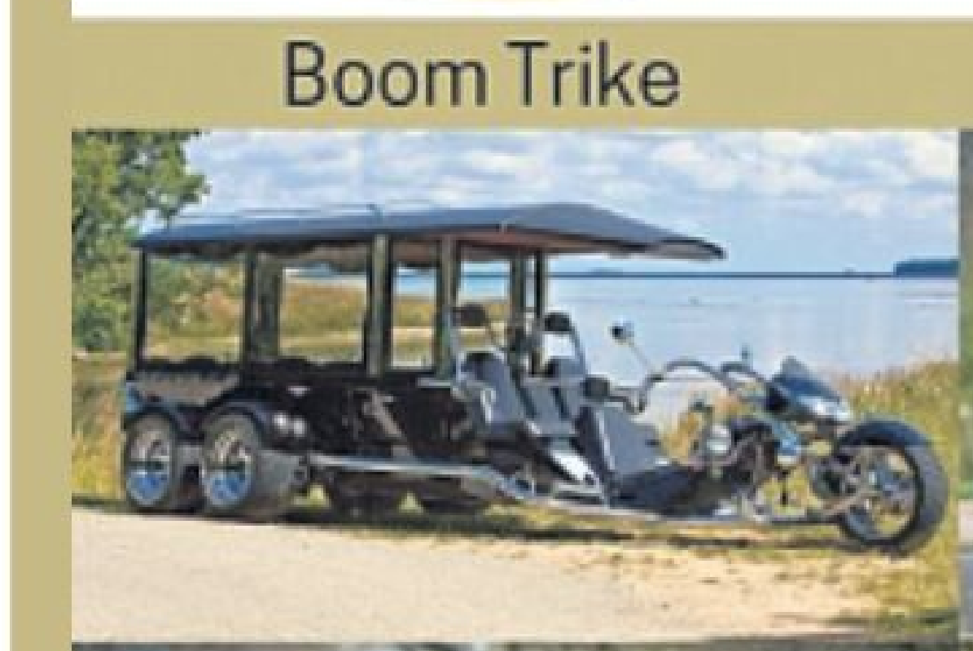

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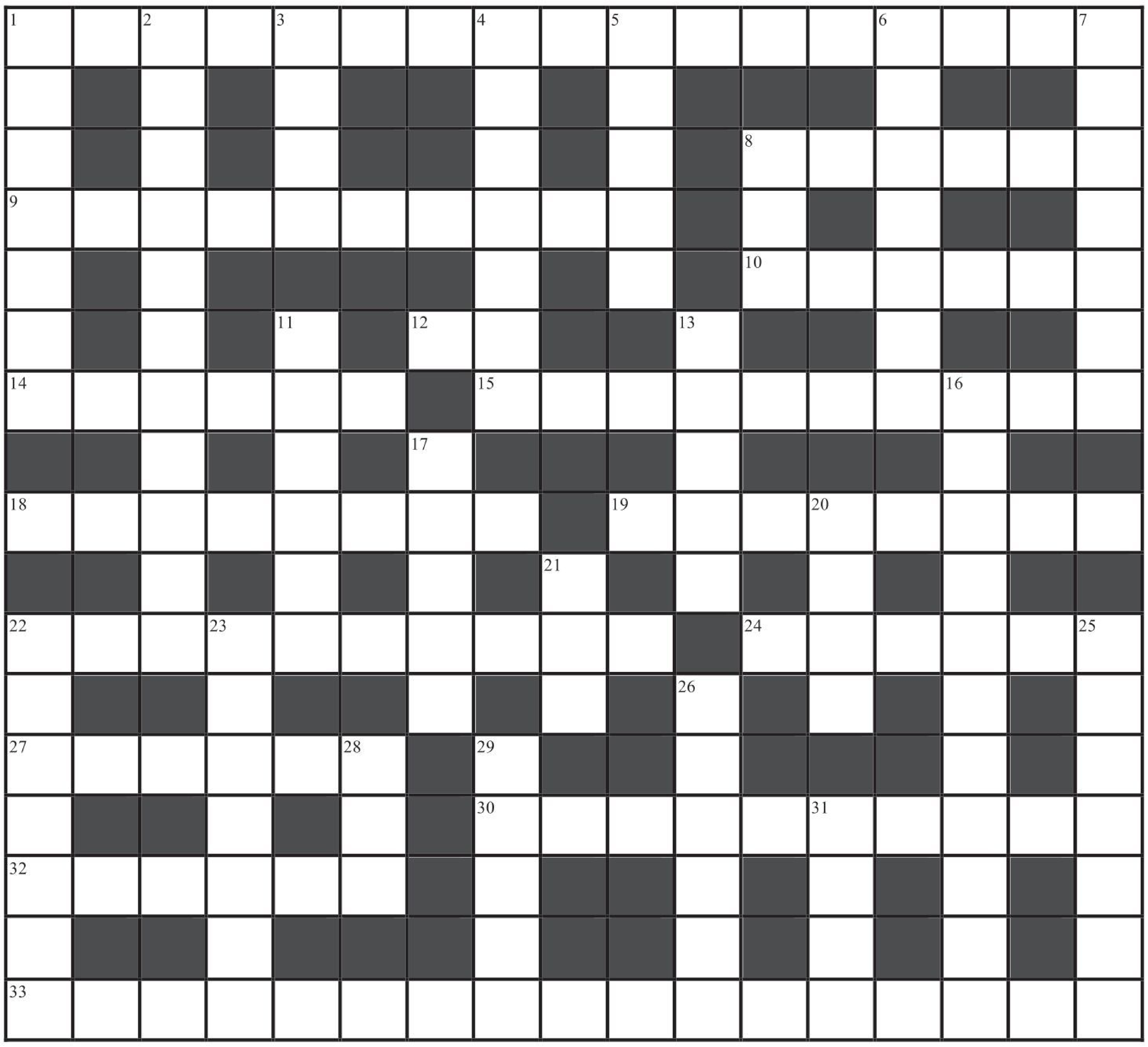

Across

1: New British adventure bike that comes with 850cc or 660cc motors. (7,5,5)
8: Dorset-based suspension makers for vintage on- and off-road machines. (6)
9: An official saying: "Crash or hazard ahead, no overtaking." (6,4)
10: Japanese clothing makers who officially sponsor the Suzuki MotoGP team. (6)
12: Title used by the Dutch round of the World Championship, to describe the whole meeting. (2)
14: Bologna-based makers of bikes you need to plug in. (1-5)
15: First-ever winner of five big Isle of Man trophies in one week. (10)
18: Former WSB Champ and new BT Sport pundit with a bizarre Franco-Brummie accent. (8)
19: Old technology tyre design used before the Radial. (8)
22: Cartoon character used by Barry Sheene. (6,4)
24: Italian competitor to 1 Across that sounds like a VW. (6)
27: Chinese manufacturers of small-capacity bikes such as the Terrain, Outlaw and Hoodlum. (6)
30: Special paint scheme typically used when a new bike model is tested on open roads. (10)
32: Italian boot makers. (6)
33: Team contest brilliantly won by Team GB in October. (8,2,7)

Down

1 & 22 Down: Very cool American kit makers that started in the off-road world. (4,3,7)
2: Angle of cylinders that can vary with any engine configuration. (11)
3: Super___, racing discipline that mixes Tarmac and dirt sections on each lap. (4)
4: In most racing where points go down to 15th, this is what you get 4 points for. (7)
5: Dial that shows fuel level, for example. (5)
6: The one in the back seat. (7)
7: Chain measurement altered by moving the wheel spindle. (7)
8: Derogatory term for Harley-Davidson's Bob. (3)
11: Surname of father and sons that work at Orange County Choppers. (6)
13: Riders such as 15 Across have a lot of these after suffering big injuries. (5)
16: Ducati powerplant used in the Panigale, amongst others. (11)
17: Result of a loss of grip in a corner that can be controlled. (5)
20: Part of a swingarm, only one is present if it's single-sided. (4)
21: Honda's MotoGP machine designation. (3)
22: See 1 Down.
23: Classic Merseyside racing circuit that is now more famous for a different kind of horse-power. (7)
25: Worcestershire-founded manufacturer that specialised in two-strokes. (7)
26: Fearsomely dominant 1990s Australian racer. (6)
28: What lights help you do at night! (3)
29: Gary, wild Aussie racer who could seriously control a 17 Down! (5)
31: Automotive former sponsor of the Yamaha MotoGP team whilst Rossi was the star. (4)

Here's the legal bit that you need to know

#29

To be in with a chance of winning, fill in your details on the form and return the completed crossword to: **MoreBikes, December 2021 Competition, Mortons Media Group Ltd, Morton Way, Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6JR. Competition closes: December 10, 2021**

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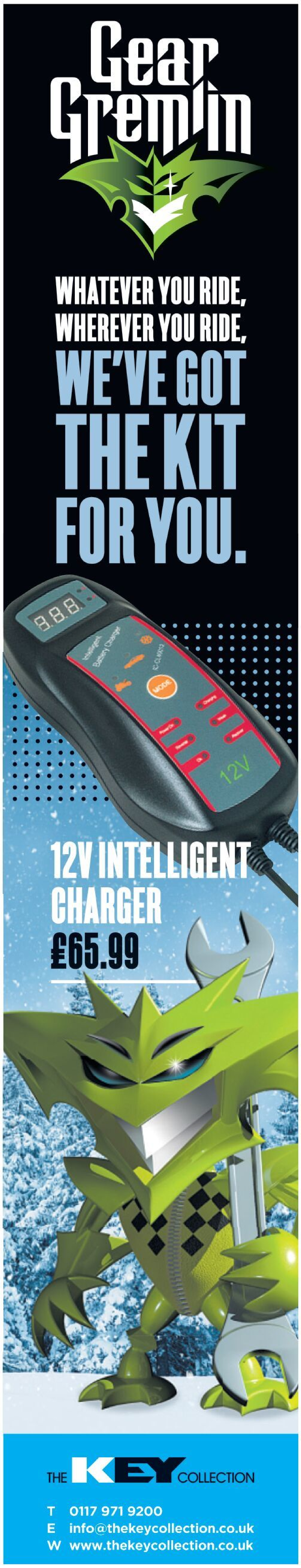
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The new face of ADVENTURE

Harley has entered the adventure bike market with a bang. Is this the end of the beaked Euro and Japanese bikes ruling the roost?

WORDS: Mikko Nieminen **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Gareth Harford

Until a few years ago, Harley-Davidson was a motorcycle manufacturer with a huge line-up of bikes, which were all fairly similar in many ways. There was a lot of choice but not that much variety. The bikes were all big V-twins. They all looked like motorcycles have looked for decades. They may have been classed as Sportsters, Tourers and Cruisers, but by and large they all shared the same style and feel – at least to an external observer. They were all unmistakably Harley-Davidsons.

Then, in 2019, H-D launched the LiveWire. An electric bike that didn't have any of the sound, smell or feel of the rest of the range. It handled superbly, looked sleek and modern, while still carrying the company's traditional design traits. It proved that Harley is capable of changing direction in surprising ways, and to make it work.

Now the Motor Company, as Harley is known by the aficionados, has entered the adventure bike market.

It may sound like an unlikely occurrence, but big adventure bikes are selling well, and if you can get a piece of that pie you would be foolish to say 'no thanks'. And the early indications are that Harley is landing on its feet in the adventure category – before the bikes were even in the showrooms it had already sold 40% of its UK production allocation.

At the same time as these new designs have been appearing, H-D has trimmed its traditional line-up (partly a strategic move, partly dictated by emissions regulations), and it now has a range that is no longer quite so vast, but it's more versatile than many other manufacturers' stables.

How many other companies can you name that have a significant presence in the cruiser, tourer, electric and adventure market?

But none of that background really matters. What matters is how good the Pan America 1250 S is. That's the question we went to answer at the UK launch in Wales, and here's the rub…

All-new everything in two flavours

The first thing to note is that there are two models, the Pan America 1250 and the Pan America 1250 S (as in Special, not Sport). Both models are all-new, built from the ground up. They share the new engine and chassis, but there are some significant differences. The biggest difference is that the base model features traditional but fully-adjustable Showa suspension, while the S has semi-active suspension, also by Showa. In addition to different damping settings available on the fly, the semi-active set up allows Harley to offer 'adaptable ride height' as an industry first. It's a £600 option for the S model, but I can see it being popular. In simple terms, the suspension lowers the ride height as you come to a stop and then climbs up to normal ride height again as you set off. The change is not an instant drop and lift, and you don't really notice the ride height rising as you take off, but you do appreciate the lower seat height when at standstill. It has the benefit of not having to shorten suspension travel to achieve a low seat height like some lowering options do, so the ride quality is uncompromised. It's clever.

Other goodies that the S has over the standard bike include centre stand, engine bars, aluminium skid plate, cornering lights, heated grips, hand guards and steering damper. Both bikes come as standard on cast wheels, but wire-spoked wheels fitting tubeless tyres are available for £400.

In terms of pricing, Harley has entered the market with a competitive price tag on the bikes. The standard bike costs £14,000, and the S starts at £15,500. For reference, the basic BMW R1250GS starts from £13,705, and the R1250GS Adventure TE that has semi-active suspension, heated grips, cruise control, etc., costs £18,410. With the Harley's tech spec very close to the BMW's, it's pretty obvious where the Americans are hoping to poach the customers.

Arai
DAINESE

The headlight is designed to illuminate off-road trails better

Swiss Army Knife for the road

Since nothing in Harley's range really lent itself to helping develop the Pan America, the engineers pretty much had a blank canvas in front of them for design and build. What they wanted to do was to create a multi-tool; an all-round bike that would handle on-and-off road.

The road from nothing to a finished product was long. One million development miles were covered with about half of that off-road. In addition to that, Harley did extensive research into what adventure riders of other bikes wanted, what Harley riders wanted, and what would make an attractive offering to both.

Key to the development process was 'function first' mentality. Everything had to be functional. This is what H-D quoted as the reason for not including the adventure 'beak' on this bike – for the Harley engineers it served no functional purpose, so it was out.

Although having a distinctive look (as much as it may divide opinion) must have been an important consideration from a sales point of view too. It would not be wise to try and mimic what's already out there and doing well.

Engine for adventure

The beating heart of the Pan America is the brand-new Revolution Max 1252cc liquid-cooled V-twin. Of course it's a V-twin, it's a Harley after all, but it's a thoroughly modern motor with impressive power figures. Peak power is a claimed 150hp (BMW 1250GS has 136hp). Maximum torque figure is 128Nm (BMW 1250GS has 143). What those figures mean in practice is that the bike has the muscles to move its 258kg (wet) bulk. That weight, by the way, is 10kg less than the GS Adventure.

"The engine has a relaxed feel. It's not fast revving, just as you'd expect, and it builds its power in a calm way."

For a big bike the Pan America can take on off-roading with relative ease

Switchgear is okay, but the buttons could be bigger

Brembo brakes scrub off speed effectively

Adjustable levers on a Harley – finally!

> **“This new set up is light and accurate, and you don’t really miss a quickshifter even if you are used to one.”**

The engine starts with a lovely V-twin rumble, but there is no shaking or vibration that you might expect from a Harley. Apparently, the engineers have reduced the vibes with counterbalance weights in the engine to the minimum, but they purposely left a tiny bit in to make the bike feel alive. It’s a good call, and there’s definitely no issue with any vibes affecting the ride.

The engine has a relaxed feel. It’s not fast revving, just as you’d expect, and it builds it’s power in a calm way. Benefitting from variable valve timing, it pulls from low revs, but you get more from the engine if you lift the engine speed a bit higher. It’s not too lumpy low down, but you certainly have more fun if you hang on to gears a little longer.

Talking about gears, the new gearbox is excellent. It’s nothing like the old Harley boxes that had all the delicate sophistication of a heavyweight boxer on a bad day.

This new set up is light and accurate, and you don’t really miss a quickshifter even if you are used to one. The clutch is light too, although with the sweet box clutchless shifting is a doddle. And how about this: the brake and clutch levers are adjustable – that must be a first for Harley. Hurray!

Tech-driven

A good example of the multi-tool approach of this bike’s design are the different ride modes. They give a range of throttle responses, limit the engine power and engine braking, and set the suspension accordingly. You have the choice of Sport, Road, Rain, Off-road ,Off-road Plus, and two custom modes.

Our road ride started with small, bumpy country roads. It was (fairly) dry so I felt that the Rain mode was a little too sluggish. The roads were quite bumpy, so I didn’t like the Sport setting either as the throttle response was too sharp and suspension hard. The perfect middle ground was the Road mode, with nicely controllable power and suitably soft suspension.

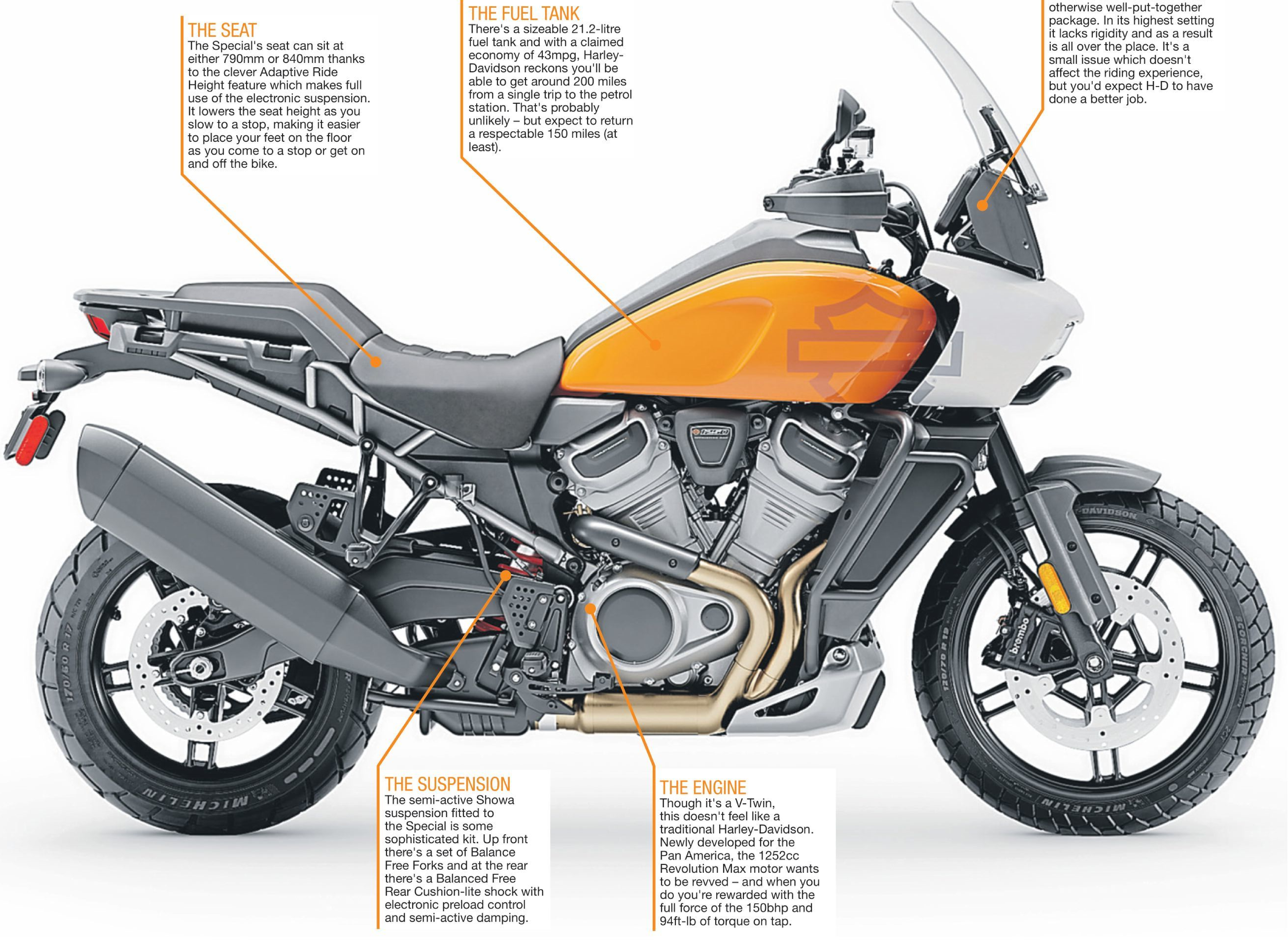
As the roads got bigger, dryer and less bumpy, the Sport mode was the one to go for, providing ample power and stability.

TECH SPEC

Harley Pan America 1250 S

Price: From £15,500
Engine: Revolution Max 1252cc, l/c, V-twin, DOHC
Power: 150hp (112kW) @ 8750rpm
Torque: 94lb-ft (128Nm)
Transmission: 6-speed, chain final drive
Frame: Steel trellis frame
Suspension: (F) 47mm inverted fork with electronically adjustable semi-active damping control. (R) Linkage-mounted monoshock with automatic electronic preload control and semi-active compression & rebound damping
Brakes: (F) radially mounted, monoblock, 4-piston caliper, 320mm dics. (R) floating, single piston caliper, 280mm disc
Tyres: Michelin Scorcher Adventure (F) 120/70R19 60V. (R) 170/60R17 72V
Fuel tank: 21.2 litres (4.7 gallons)
Fuel economy: Claimed 43mpg (15.2km/l)
Weight: 258kg (wet)
Seat height: Adjustable seat. Without adaptable ride height (ARH): 850/875mm. With ARH: 825/856mm
Warranty: 24 months/unlimited miles
Service intervals: 5000 miles
Roadside recovery: 12 months
Contact: www.harley-davidson.com/gb/en

Harley-Davidson Pan America 1250 S



THE SCREEN
Adustable by hand, the screen is one of few letdowns of an otherwise well-put-together package. In its highest setting it lacks rigidity and as a result is all over the place. It's a small issue which doesn't affect the riding experience, but you'd expect H-D to have done a better job.

THE FUEL TANK
There's a sizeable 21.2-litre fuel tank and with a claimed economy of 43mpg, Harley-Davidson reckons you'll be able to get around 200 miles from a single trip to the petrol station. That's probably unlikely – but expect to return a respectable 150 miles (at least).

THE SEAT
The Special's seat can sit at either 790mm or 840mm thanks to the clever Adaptive Ride Height feature which makes full use of the electronic suspension. It lowers the seat height as you slow to a stop, making it easier to place your feet on the floor as you come to a stop or get on and off the bike.

THE SUSPENSION
The semi-active Showa suspension fitted to the Special is some sophisticated kit. Up front there's a set of Balance Free Forks and at the rear there's a Balanced Free Rear Cushion-lite shock with electronic preload control and semi-active damping.

THE ENGINE
Though it's a V-Twin, this doesn't feel like a traditional Harley-Davidson. Newly developed for the Pan America, the 1252cc Revolution Max motor wants to be revved – and when you do you're rewarded with the full force of the 150bhp and 94ft-lb of torque on tap.

The Pan America really suits fast and flowing roads where you can stretch its legs. Steering is light, and although cornering is not super-fast, it feels effortless. Once you have entered the corner the bike holds the line well, with the suspension working great in keeping the ride smooth and controlled.

The Pan America has an adjustable screen that's easy to use on the go. It's not massive, but it works well, and takes the wind off your body without buffeting your head too much. I didn't notice much difference between the high and low settings, but as always, that depends on your height and sensitivity to windblast.

Cruise control is standard on both bikes, and the S has heated grips and hand guards, too. All of them make the ride a little more relaxed, but for me the star of the show was the comfy riding position. The seat is well-padded and very comfortable. With the seat in the higher of the two settings, I found that I could still get my feet on the ground (thanks to the adaptive ride height), and I had much more room for my legs. The wide bars are high and close enough to make steering easy, too.

Our launch ride was not long enough to make any definitive calls about long-distance comfort, but from the few hours I spent on the bike I could imagine this being one of the most comfortable big-mile munchers out there.

Off the beaten track

From the fast A roads we headed off to the adventure playground that is the Mick Extance Experience. Guided by Mick himself we had a chance to try the bike on trails, which highlighted its off-road capabilities.

Big adventure bikes are never going to be as good off-road as little enduro bikes, but for a biggun the Pan handled very well. It's clear that the centre of gravity is low, making slow riding in a difficult environment much easier. The wide and reasonably high bars helped keeping the lines, and once the off-road mode was selected the traction control and suspension worked seamlessly.

Our light off-roading also showed the Michelin Scorcher Adventure tyres in good light. They have been especially developed for this bike (the same tyres fit both cast and laced wheels), and they seemed at ease on- and off-road.

A nice little touch helping the control of the bike while riding standing up is that the rear brake pedal is height adjustable. Every little helps, of course.

Final stretch

On the way back from our off-roading we had a bit more time on Tarmac, and a chance to reflect on the bike's overall performance.

My overall feeling was of a positive surprise.

The engine does not feel quite as potent as the BMW boxer (apologies for the constant comparisons, but the GS is the benchmark in the category), but it's easy to ride and certainly doesn't feel sluggish. You just have to be a bit more 'on it'. The chassis also seemed very solid and stable. The suspension was faultless in every environment, the brakes were good and strong, and the long swingarm helped to keep things calm even at speed.

The Pan America is absolutely loaded with tech, which most of these bikes are now. It doesn't have the season's speciality, the adaptive cruise control, but it does have pretty much everything else you could wish for. Using all that tech is pretty simple with the combination of the TFT touchscreen and switchgear.

The buttons on the switchgear are on the small side, so they take some getting used to, and could be difficult with winter gloves, and it took me most of the day to get used to the indicator switch (instead of cancelling the indicator, I kept indicating the other way…).

As you may have guessed, there is also an H-D app that you can use to link with the bike. This enables using the TFT screen as a satnav, which is another clever little bit of tech.

The main thing that I took away from the ride, however, was that beyond all that tech and unusual looks, the Pan America is a very capable motorcycle. It rides well and offers great comfort. Many will have misgivings about an adventure bike from Harley, but I bet that most people who like adventure bikes will like the Pan if they take a test ride. We might well have a new significant competitor in the adventure market. Watch this space!

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GETTING READY FOR WINTER: RIDING AND MAINTENANCE

Winter's fast approaching, and for many bikers that means it's getting to that time of year when they think about stashing their pride and joy away under covers for the next few months and wait for the rain, sleet and snow to pass. That's not the case for everyone though, as some riders don't have a choice and will be starting to think about preparing their bike (and themselves) for riding right through the winter.

Regular bike maintenance is an essential part of riding a motorcycle. We all know that. But it becomes even more important when the weather takes a turn. Grit on the roads and low temperatures are the perfect recipe for corrosion, but with just a little preparation and care, it's possible to protect your machine from the worst that winter has to offer. Sometimes a splash of cleaning fluid and a quick hose down will do, but if you want to keep your bike in top condition, you'll need to be a bit more thorough than that. To help ease your winter woes, we've rustled up a brief guide to help you get set up, no matter whether you're planning on tucking your bike away or riding right through the colder months.

SERVICE

If your bike is due a service (or has one scheduled for over the winter months), now's the perfect time to get it done. If you sort it out before you lay up the bike, you'll be ready and raring to go as soon as Spring rolls back round. And if there are any issues that crop up while you're giving it a once-over, then you've got the next few months to deal with them.

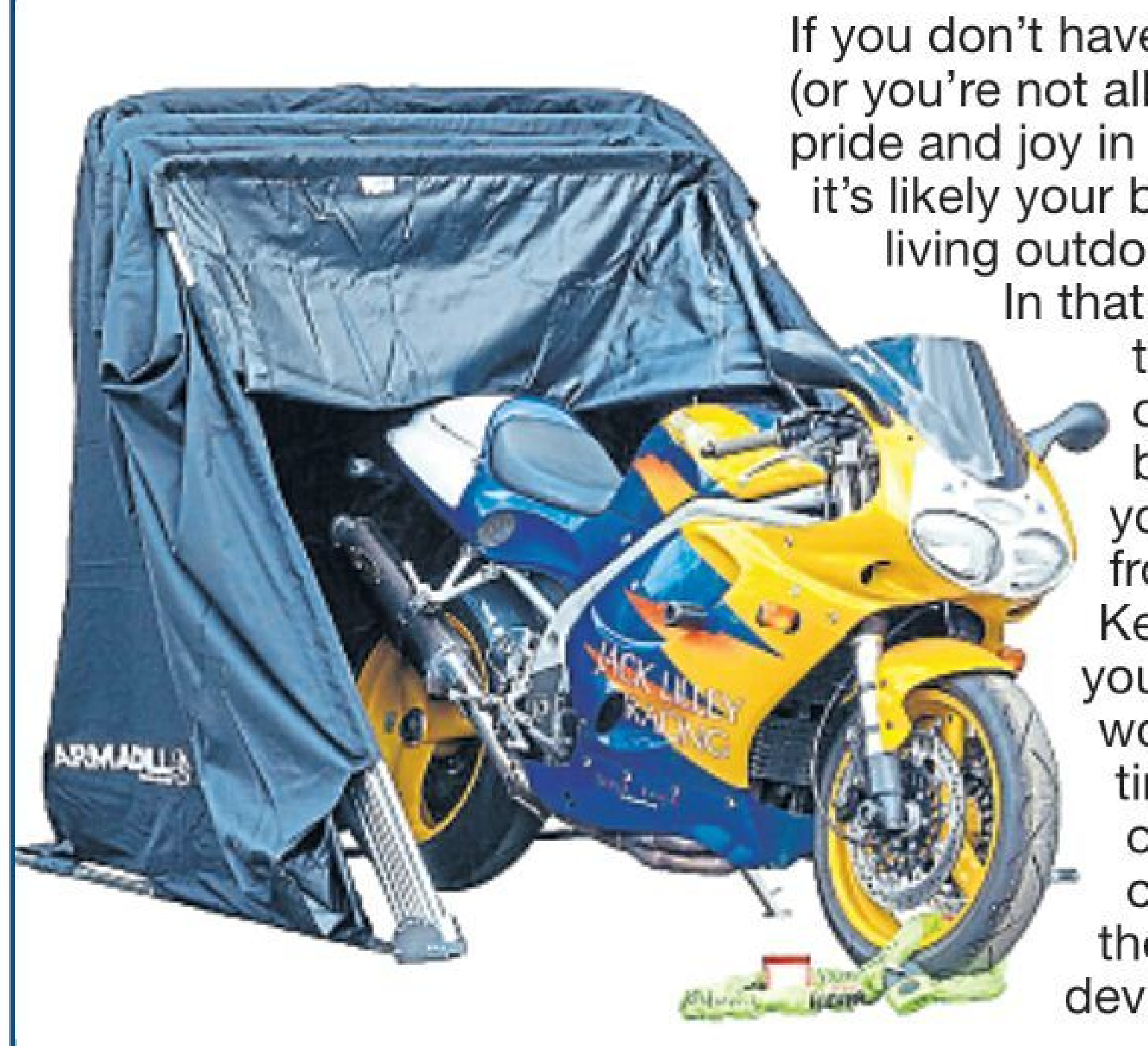
LUBRICATION

If you're on top of your bike maintenance, you'll already be lubricating your bike's chain and sprockets on a regular basis. But if you're planning on tucking your bike away over the winter, it's worth noting that a good dollop of heavy-duty lubricant is essential. It'll help prevent oxidisation, O-rings perishing, and the chain tightening.

DRAIN THE FUEL

That's right. Ideally, you should drain all the fuel from your bike. If you leave fuel in the tank for a few months it can cause oxidisation and varnishing. That's not all, it can even 'gum up' other parts of the engine, causing blockages and (potentially) leaks in the fuel system. If you're reasonably mechanically minded, you'll have no trouble draining the system. Just remember to get all of it. If you're not quite so technically competent, there is an alternative. You can use a fuel stabilising additive. All you've got to do is buy yourself the additive, throw it in the fuel tank, and then run the bike for a few minutes to ensure that the stabilised fuel has passed right through the fuel system.

Keep it covered



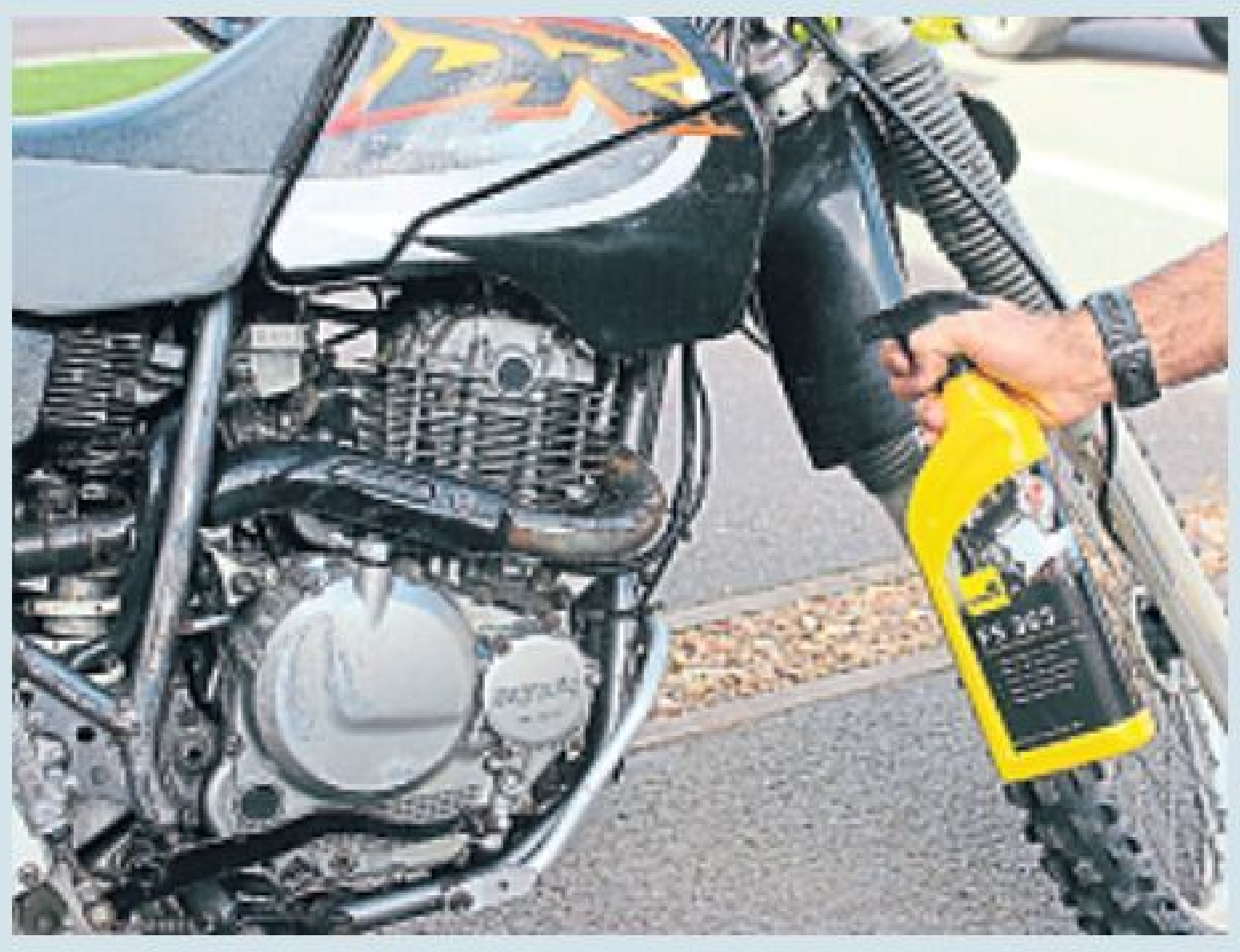
If you don't have a garage or shed (or you're not allowed to keep your pride and joy in the living room), it's likely your bike's going to be living outdoors over the winter. In that case, you'll need to get your hands on a good-quality bike cover to keep your bike protected from the elements. Keeping it dry is your priority, and it's worth finding the time to give it a once-over every so often to make sure there are no issues developing.

Prepare your bike for winter

Plenty of riders choose to lay their bikes up over the winter months. And as the nights draw in and the weather starts to take a turn for the worse, now's the time to get your bike ready for hibernation. To ensure it's in tip-top shape when the weather warms up again, there are a range of jobs you can do before you tuck it away.

Keep it clean

Keeping your bike clean is important at any time of the year, but if you're planning to lay it up over the winter, you're going to need to give it a serious deep clean. Don't be shy. Get stuck in. Any dirt, debris or damp spots left on the bike could cause corrosion if left for a few months, so you should clean the bodywork (both inside and out), the engine, the frame, the swingarm, the wheels, the front forks and the rear shock(s) thoroughly. And you need to make sure it's properly dry, too. If you don't have access to an airline, dry as much as you can using good old-fashioned elbow grease, and then leave it to air dry before you put it under wraps. To keep it clean and preserve your hard work, just chuck a bike cover or old bed sheet over the bike. Easy.



Tyre care

When you're stashing your pride and joy away for the winter, the last thing you probably think about is your bike's tyre pressures. Even though you're not riding, you should ensure the tyres are topped up to the appropriate level. If they're not inflated properly throughout the winter, you'll likely come back to your bike and find the tyres are no good – with flat spots and damaged side walls

Battery care

Batteries lose performance in cold weather. It's as simple as that. A drop of just a couple of volts can be enough to prevent your bike from starting - and although you could go out and get yourself a new one without too much hassle, there are ways you can ensure your existing battery is well cared for through the winter.

The best thing you can do is hook your bike up to a 'trickle' charger. All you've got to do is fit it to your bike's battery, turn it on, and let it keep your battery topped up.

Another alternative would be to disconnect the battery and shift it indoors to keep it warm. You'll probably want to give it a good charge before its next use, though. It's also important to remember that alarms, immobilisers and tracker units will all drain power from the battery – so if you can, it'd be wise to disconnect them.

BEAT THE COLD: WINTER RIDING TIPS AND TRICKS

Riding a motorcycle at any time of the year demands caution, but riding through the winter can prove especially treacherous. But that doesn't mean you have to give up riding, and tuck your ride away in a darkened garage until the sun reappears. With the right kit, a little common sense, and some minor changes in your riding style, you can carry on riding safely through all but the worst of the winter weather.

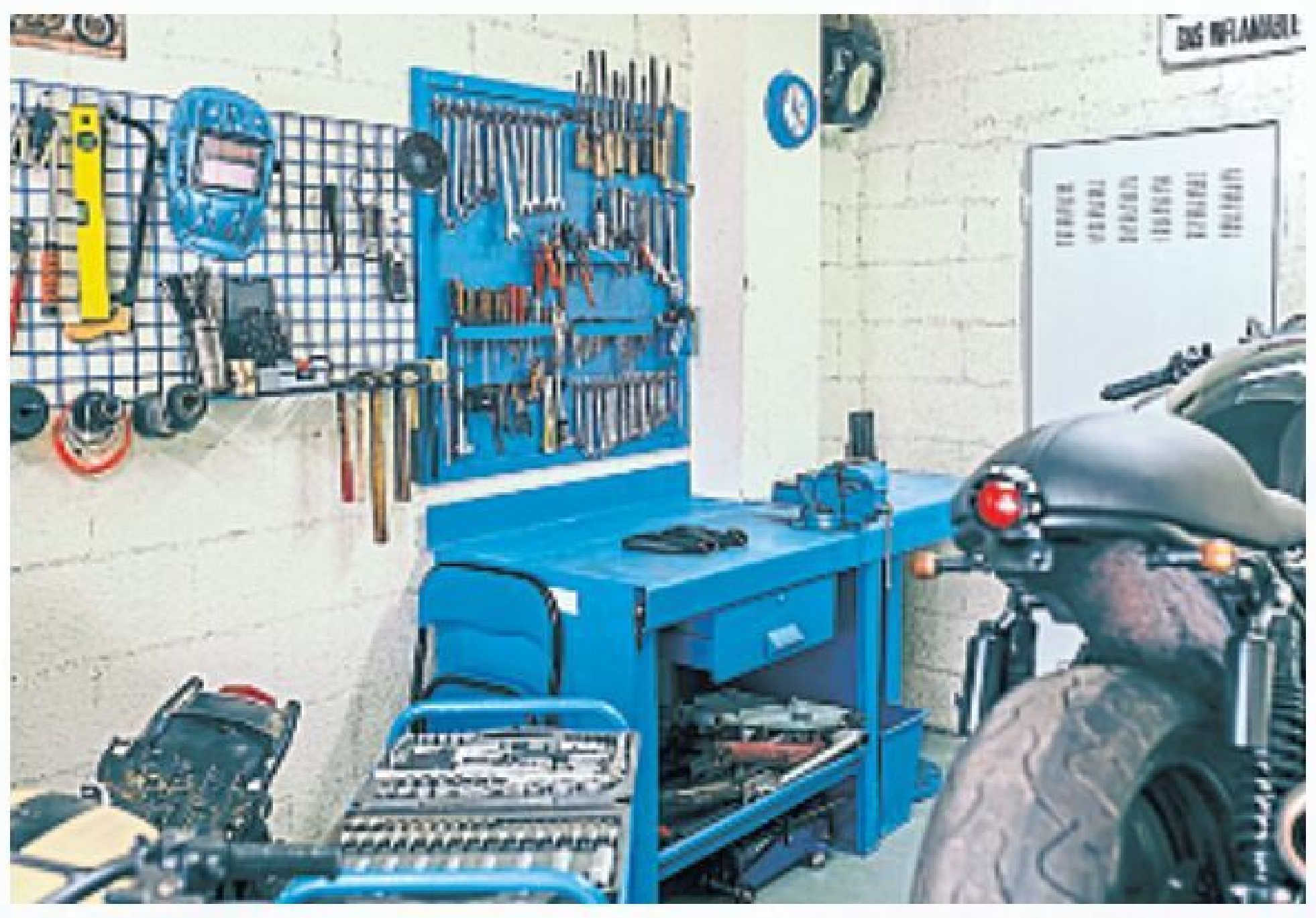
WATCH THE WEATHER

Keep an eye on the weather if you're planning to get out on two wheels. If the temperature has dropped below freezing overnight, chances are that patches of ice could easily form. Even if the weather looks mild, there's no guarantee you'll not encounter some ice on your journey.

If it's snowing outside, try and avoid venturing out on your bike. You might think you've got the skills, experience and response times to handle it, but accidents do happen. In short, play it safe when the weather's bad and don't over-estimate your abilities.

COLD WEATHER, COLDER TYRES

Cold weather means cold tyres, and cold tyres means limited traction. We all know that. Of course, riding will help to increase heat and subsequently traction, but even the briefest break in cold weather will allow your tyres to quickly cool, and you're back to square one.



Don't skimp; you'll need to ensure you've got plenty of tread left if you're going to be riding through winter. If the weather takes a turn, you'll need all the tread you can get to help channel water/snow on cold roads. And be sure to check your tyre pressures too, ideally before every ride.

BRAKING DISTANCES

There are a number of factors that can affect braking distances, including vehicle weight, speed, braking force and thinking time. Add winter road conditions to the mix and you're going to want to adapt your riding to help keep you safe out on two wheels.

Braking distances in winter can increase up to 10 times, so the more space you give yourself, the better. Firstly, open up your line of sight and increase your visibility – basically, look further down the road than you usually would, to give you as much time as possible to react to possible hazards. Secondly, increase your following distance. Riding tight up to the back end of a car is always a bad idea. Even in optimum conditions you're going to struggle to pull up in time, never mind if the road is wet or icy.

WRAP UP

Being cold and wet on a bike is not fun. In fact, you'll become less alert, and your slower reaction times could leave you at risk. Insulated, non-bulky, wind and waterproof gear will maintain your body temperature and keep you at your sharpest when out on the road. Multi-layering works best, but it's important to make sure you are able to handle the controls easily and effectively. There's nothing worse than a bulky pair of gloves which make you catch your horn when you reach for your indicators.

In short, there is no doubt that a warm rider is far safer than one who is frozen solid in the winter chill. Being too cold can lead to shivering, exhaustion, confusion, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness, low energy, slow reaction times, and stiff and sore joints. Whereas, warm and comfortable riders are more alert, more supple, and better able to deal with emergency situations as they may arise.

Don't forget...

- Never assume that you've been seen by other road users (sensible advice all-year round to be fair). Signal earlier, wear bright, reflective gear, and give other drivers/riders plenty of room.
- Be sure to check your lights and tyre pressures regularly – ideally, before every ride.
- Increase the braking distance to account for wet or icy roads.
- Watch your lean angle and be cautious of wet leaves and drain covers.
- Stay fog free and able to see by using anti-misting spray on your visor and mirrors.

INVERTED SNOBBERY

The GSX-R1100K was a bit of a handful and Suzuki's successor, the 1100L, was supposed to turn all that on its head – literally, as it was the first Suzuki model with the soon-to-be-fashionable inverted or 'upside-down' front forks…

GSX-R 1100
SUZUKI

Words: Bertie Simmonds **Photography:** Joe Dick, Mortons Archive

It's fair to say it was form and function that led to the changes to the mighty Suzuki GSX-R1100 becoming the 'L' model for 1990 – that's more than 30 years ago now…

If we delve into history, Suzuki's GSX-R1100 was an impressive sports bruiser of a motorcycle. Coming out in 1986, the 1100G was based heavily on the previous year's trend-setting GSX-R750F. So, it aped the looks of little brother, sharing a similar-looking MR767 aluminium box-section 'double-cradle' frame, the 'Full-Floater' swingarm, and a 1052cc motor which would become legendary in tuning and drag-race circles. Or should that be drag-race 'straight lines'? Like the 750, cooling would be a combination of air/oil, but power was a mighty 128bhp claimed at the crank at just under 10,000rpm. Weight would be 197 kilos dry, but this would creep up as the various models progressed.

So it was that by 1988 the K-model 1100 weighed in at around 210 kilos dry, albeit with 10bhp more at around 9000rpm. But it was the suspension and overall geometry that seemed to be the main issue – the 1100K was, in fact, a bit of a wobbler…

While the preceding H and J models had been refinements of what went before, the K-model had some big changes and it (again) followed the looks and design of the previous year's 750J GSX-R, known almost universally as the 'Slingshot.' In came an 1127cc motor, which had been seen on the GSX1100F sports-tourer from 1987, which was (effectively) simply slotted into the GSX-R750J's chassis. Peak power was well up, thanks in part to those 36mm carburettors, and torque was up from 76lb-ft of the 1100J to 82-85lb-ft of the K, but the chassis seemed hard pressed to cope, even if the styling was fresh and new.

Launched at the relatively new Jerez race circuit for 1989, the billiard-table smooth circuit didn't show up any major issues. But when the bikes came back to Blighty, journalists and owners reported on slow-speed steering issues, a basic nervousness to the handling itself, and a stiff and uncompromising suspension feel overall. Many felt that the shortened wheelbase and trail, plus smaller 17in (previously 18in) wheels and steeper head angle made the thing a bit of a pig when allied to the stodgy right-way-up forks. To ride the 1100K well, the rider needed to be on their game and put in a lot of physical effort.

Furygan
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GSX-R 1100

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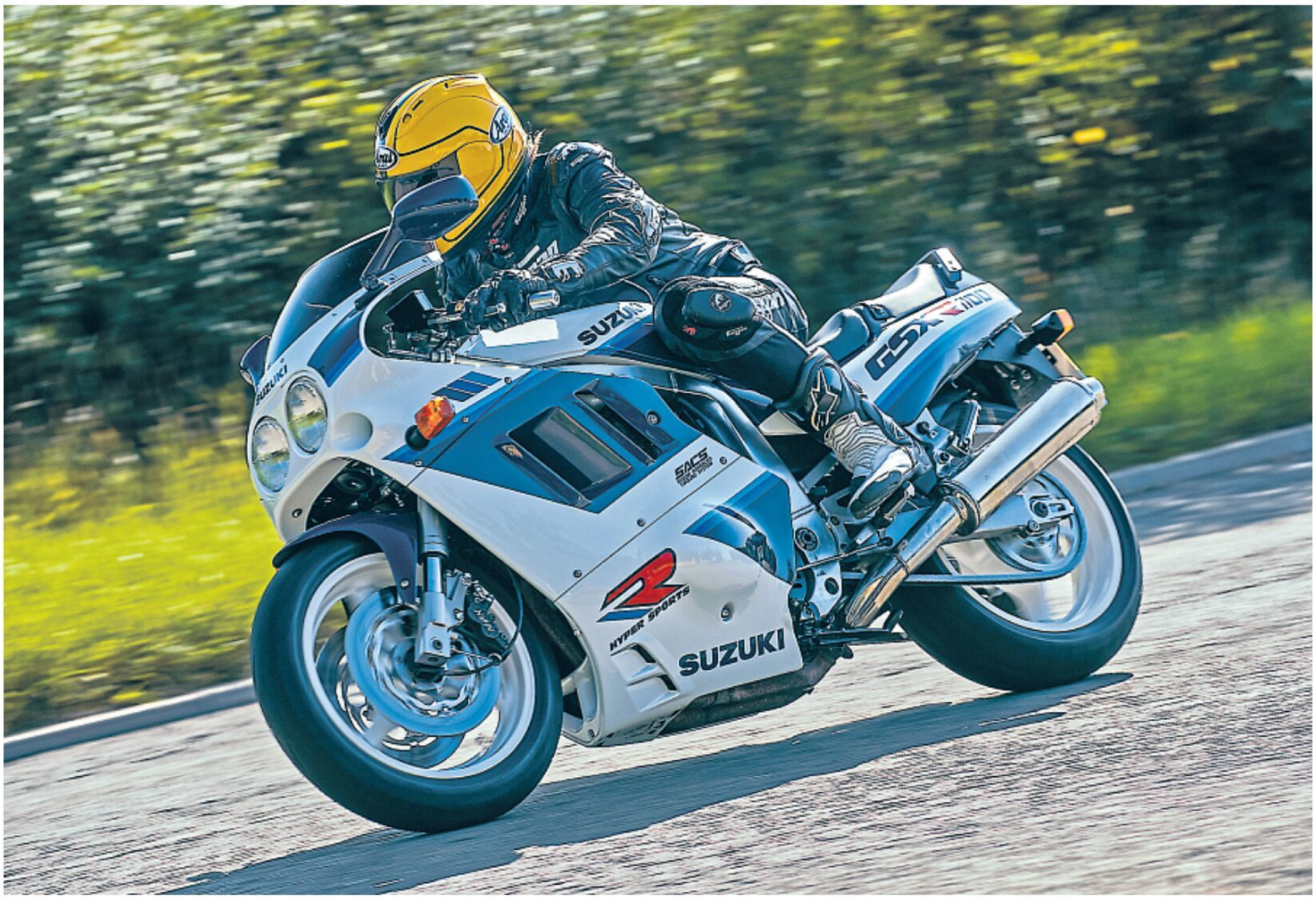

Worse was to come at the 1989 Isle of Man TT races when Phil Mellor crashed his GSX-R1100 and died during the 1300 Production TT race. Many attributed the proddie crashes to an anomaly between power, handling and the road tyres of the time. Either way, the damage had been done to the bike's image and big-bore production racing on the Isle of Man wouldn't return until 1996.

Suzuki reacted swiftly to the issues. For 1990, the Suzuki GSX-R1100L would have a longer wheelbase by some 35mm over the K, thanks in due part to a longer swingarm, by about 25mm.

More stability came from wider front and rear rims, holding 130 section (front) and 160 section (rear) tyres. Of course, the forks themselves would be 'inverted', otherwise known as 'upside-down' forks.

So why inverted forks? Well, they worked better even if early versions were heavier than their conventional telescopic right-way-up brethren. The idea originally came from off-road and it was thought that turning the fork upside-down gave the fork itself greater strength and rigidity as the larger diameter part of the fork is being held by the yokes. This makes the front-end 'stiffer'. By the late 1980s handy racer Anders Andersson started to use inverted telescopic forks on his F1 road-race bike – the rest was history. Later, Anders would work with Ohlins Suspension and help Carl Fogarty take his first couple of World Superbike titles.

For road bikes, the 1100L pointed the way to the future with inverted front forks – only really the 1992-1999 Honda CBR900RR FireBlades eschewed them, as designer Tadao Baba thought they added too much weight. He changed his mind for the CBR929RR of 2000 as the components themselves had become much lighter. The trend of the time meant that the early Blades and even Triumph's T595 Daytona would feature a right-way-up fork which was actually made to look like an upside-down one. Fashion, eh? This continues today with most forks on modern motorcycles.

But, while we talk about fashion, let's drink in the looks of this beauty – it's timeless. The GSX-R1100L may have piled on the pounds compared to the first couple of versions (she's 240 kilos or 529lb wet with fuel and oil), but she sure looks pretty, especially in this Suzuki corporate blue and white scheme.

From the front, those lovely inverted legs grab the three-spoke front wheel, equipped with the classic Nissin four-pot calipers, along with slotted 310mm discs. It's just classic Suzuki, as is that twin-lamp visage. Closely following Suzuki's successful endurance racers of the 1980s and early 1990s, the 1100L has all the looks of a racer for the road, and those air-scoops that could probably snare a rabbit may or may not serve any real useful purpose but – stuff it all – they look so racer cool.

This bike is a simply stunning restoration – especially when you see where it came from (see sidebar). To go from overgrown garden ornament to stunning Suzuki resto has been a labour of love and is a credit to the Suzuki Vintage Parts Programme, their boss Tim Davies, as well as all the hard-working young apprentices from the Suzuki Apprentice Centre in Doncaster.

Let's saddle up – yes, the saddle. Other trainspotters out there will maybe see that the vinyl on the saddle is black instead of the dark blue of the original. No matter, I can't see it now that I'm on the bike itself. Wow! This is a real man's bike, this. You can feel as you move it side to side between your legs that it's big and it's heavy – best I be ready for a bit of a fight. We know it's powerful (or it was by 1990s standards anyway) and it just oozes machismo. Like with many older bikes, you get the impression that you're sitting down in the Suzuki rather than being perched on top of it, and some of us prefer that feeling as you often feel better connected to the road.

The centre of being with this machine – or with any GSX-R1100 – has to be that motor. Now, I've ridden lots of these and you've got five speeds because you really don't need much else – in fact, you could probably get away with four! Ride that wave of torque – there's no real need to prod that gear lever very much. The engine will happily provide a smidge of motive power from as little as 2500-3000rpm, but then will pick up nicely from around 5500, before tearing off like a mad thing from around 7000 up to peak power between 9-10,000rpm.

There is no point in revving the boobies off this baby, it's all about that lovely wave of oomph, so you can just keep the bike in the sweet spot from between 6-8000rpm, rolling effortlessly between third and fourth gears. It's where the bike (and I) really like to be… Finally, I've got to say this (again), that even compared to today's gargantuan power outputs of anything up to and over 200bhp, these old GSX-R mills still thrill and impress. It's a legendary powerplant and smooth as silk.

Handling is a hard thing to measure without the chance to back-to-back this L with the previous K model, but in isolation it's 'interesting'. If I recall rightly, the rear-end comes with numerous settings. Something like seven preload settings, 19 for rebound and 19 again for compression; and I love the old-school-cool remote adjuster. Tip-in always feels like a bit of a leap of faith… double-cradle GSX-Rs always had a 'tip, tip, DROP' feel to them. Not a bad thing, but it just needs some getting used to, but I've always wondered what the older GSX-Rs would feel like out on a track or being raced.

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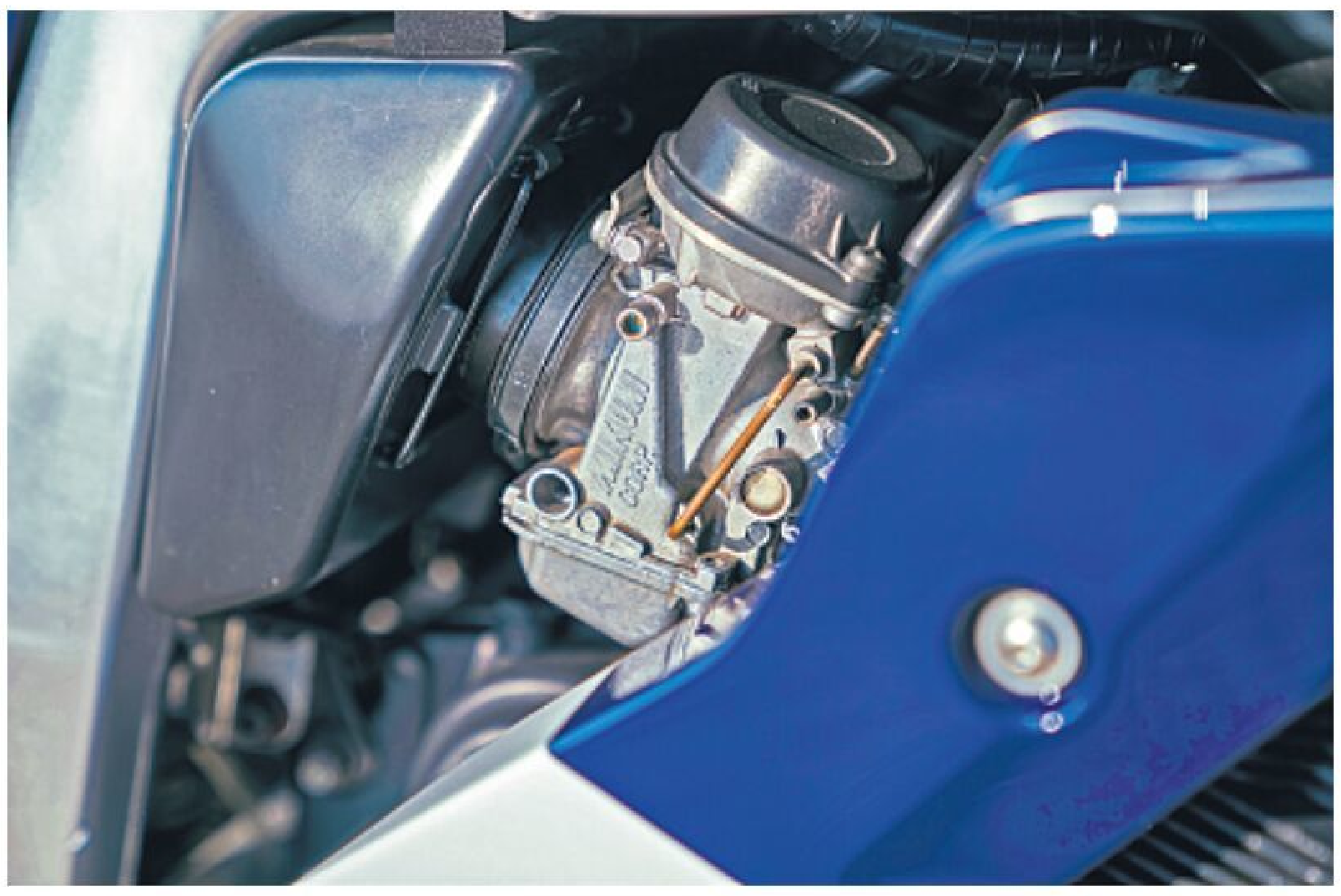
Two scary-handling Suzukis... the 1100L and the TL1000S.

Both the front and rear-ends do feel a bit soft but I'm not going to change them or fiddle as I just want to enjoy my short ride on this lovely machine. Up front those Nissins do lack a little something, power, perhaps, but – remember – they are hauling up a lot of machine and a lot of man... well, perhaps too much man...



If there's something that is a pain – for me at least – it's the seating position. You're all sat in, but spread 'over' the bike. Eight years back I did a back-to-back of my own 1998 GSX-R1100W-S and a 2012 GSX-R1000. You'd think the smaller, newer bike would be the least comfortable, but not a bit of it.

I had very bad knee pain on the W-S and a ride to and from a track day at Donington Park convinced me to sell it. Then, about five years back a ride on the Suzuki Vintage Parts Programme's own GSX-R750F from 1985 was like some sort of torture. I'm simply not as bendy as I once was. For me, these old GSX-Rs are for short hops only. And you'll be hopping for a while after, too. You're spread over that tank and the ergonomics just feel designed to abuse your joints – especially my knees.

Or is it my age?

TECH SPEC

SUZUKI GSXR 1100L

Engine: Air/oil-cooled, four-cylinder, four-stroke
Capacity: 1127cc
Bore & stroke: 78 x 59mm
Compression Ratio: 10:1
Carburetion: 36mm Mikuni BST36SS x 4
Max power: 130hp @ 9500rpm (claimed, rear wheel)
Torque: 85ft-lb @ 7500rpm
Ignition: Digital
Transmission: Five-speed gearbox, wet multi-plate clutch, chain final drive
Frame: Aluminium cast/extruded double-cradle frame
Suspension: Forks: 43mm Kayaba inverted telescopic forks, multi-adjustable. Rear: Full-Floater monoshock, fully adjustable
Tyres: 130/60-17 front, 180/55-17
Brakes: Front: Twin 310mm discs, four-piston Nissin caliper. Rear: single 240mm disc, two-piston caliper
Wheelbase: 1370mm
Rake & trail: 24.5º, 99mm
Wheelbase: 1465mm
Weight: 210kg (dry) 240kg (wet)
Fuel capacity: 21 litres

GSX-R1100 RESTORED: WITH GENUINE PARTS & DEDICATION
tyco
TO DO LIST
SUZUKI VINTAGE PARTS
WHAT WE'RE DOING...
TL1000S
The project was part of Suzuki's Vintage Parts Programme display at Motorcycle LIVE.

Suzuki GSX-R1100 year by year

Introduced in 1986, Suzuki's GSX-R1100 looked very similar to the GSX-R750 it was derived from, but with a bigger engine, power upped to 125bhp, and a more robust aluminium-alloy frame.

1986: The GSX-R1100G: Oil/air-cooled 1052cc DOHC 16-valve engine, five speeds, 18-inch wheels, 197 kilos (434lb) dry.

1987: GSX-R1100H: Unchanged apart from graphics.

1988: GSX-R1100J: Wider rims, three-spoke wheels, bigger 160/60ZR18 rear tyre. A wider front mudguard was fitted along with a stronger side-stand, some graphic changes.

1989: GSX-R1100K: Redesigned with a lower chassis based on the Slingshot 750 introduced late 1988. Engine increased to 1127cc with bigger 36mm carburettors, power increased to 136bhp at 9500rpm. Weight up by 13kg to 210kg (462lb). Wheels changed to 17in with wider tyres.

1990: GSX-R1100L: Longer 57.7in wheelbase and inverted telescopic fork from Showa to meet criticism of poor steering and handling.

1991: GSX-R1100M: Styling changed with enclosed headlamp and revised steering geometry giving 64.2-degree head angle rather than 65.5 degrees. Tyre sizes increased to 120/70ZR17 and 180/55ZR17. More refined suspension with wider range of adjustment for compression and rebound damping.

1992: GSX-R1100N: Unchanged apart from graphics: this was the last of the series to use the oil/air-cooled engine.

1993-1998: GSX-R1100WP-WW: Major revamp with 1074cc water-cooled motor, power now 155bhp (restricted in some markets), weight now 231kilos. These are the unfashionable models of 1100 and can be found cheap…

18+

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SUZUKI
GSX-R 1100
SUZUKI

But despite all this, I can't get that motor and the sheer coolness of this bike out of my head. I mean, look at those classic clocks… 190mph on one and the 11,500rpm redline on the other. The very layout with the tachometer dominant: then, like a racing afterthought, the black-box square containing the idiot lights, including neutral lamp, fuel warning light, high-beam and indicators. Love it… so many good memories looking at clocks like this, while the scenery rushes by at warp speed.

Prices for GSX-Rs have been traditionally low, but they're heading north now. Even as recently as five or six years ago you could get a useable 1100 for a couple of grand, now prices are firming up big time. It's strange that there are some low-ish milers out there, let's say sub 25k.

We've seen some half-decent last of the air/oil-cooled big GSX-Rs with 30,000 miles on them for around £2500-3000. We've spotted mint 1100Ks with 15,000 on the clocks for £4000, and then the water-cooled models for around £4000-£4500. As for the L, we've seen them for between £3000-5000, but it's still the early slab-siders that are generally the most sought-after and therefore the ones that command the biggest prices.

Motors are generally bulletproof, while the ancillaries are all about how well they've been looked after… sadly the GSX-R range from small to the 1100 were generally used and abused, and often wore a wide range of tasteless tat.

Thankfully, in recent years – and thanks to the Suzuki Vintage Parts Programme – many old mighty machines with the oil/air-cooled lump in are back in favour and being returned to standard.

For me, the GSX-R1100 in all its forms is a big part of my life; I've ridden loads and owned one. And, while I feel my battered body may not be best suited to its ergonomics any more, that doesn't mean I can't enjoy a good thrash on one.

Those of a more flexible nature could do worse than bag an oil/air-cooled biggie soon…

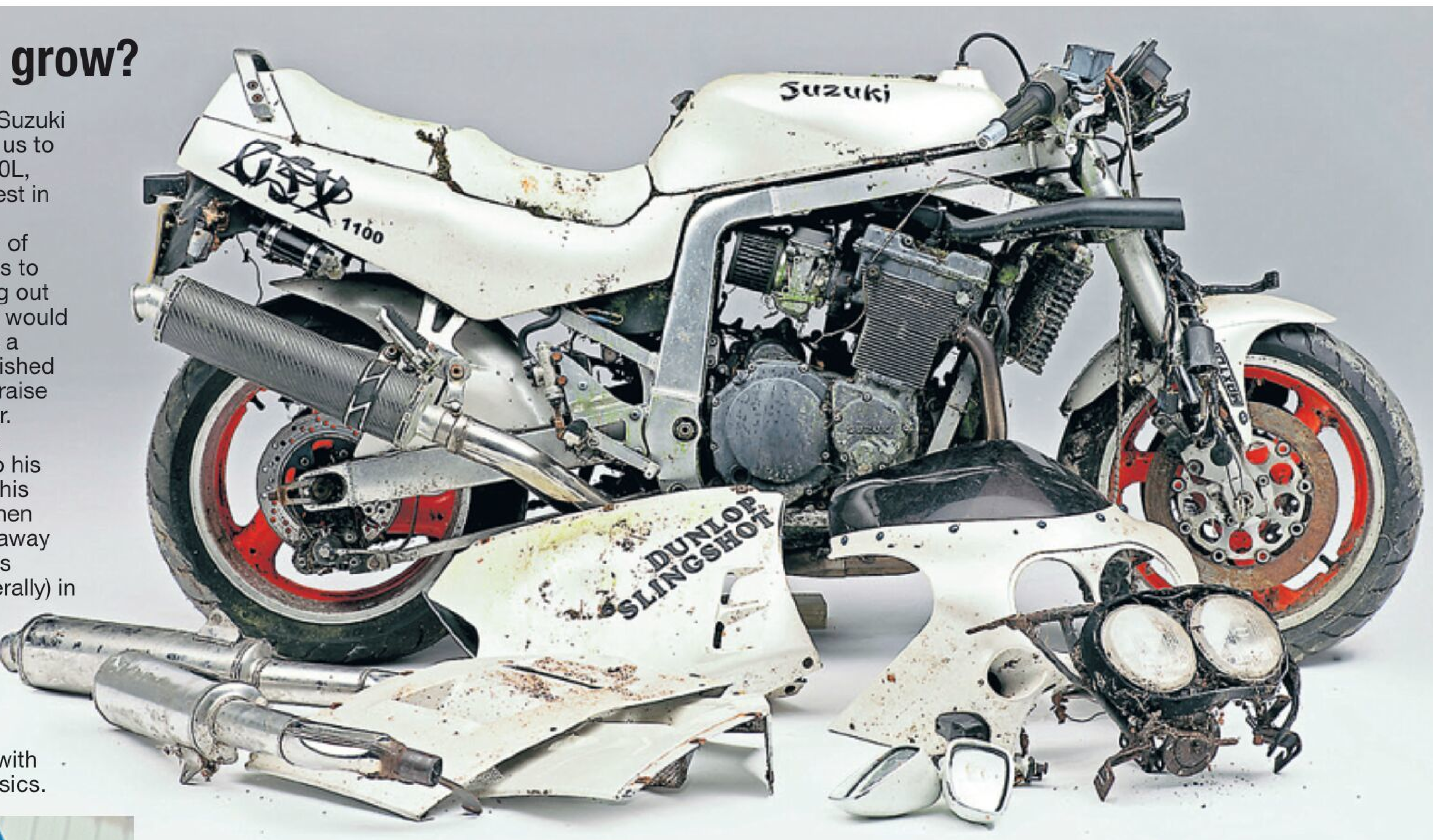
■ **Thanks to: Front-of-camera stuntman Stuart Barker**

How does your garden grow?

Back in 2014 CMM was approached by the Suzuki Apprentice Centre in Doncaster. They asked us to follow their restoration on a 1990 GSX-R1100L, which would eventually result in a full road-test in this very organ.

This would be a strip-down and restoration of this legendary machine, the aim of which was to teach the young apprentices all about sorting out 'old' rather than 'new' bikes – after all, many would go to their Suzuki dealerships and never see a bike this old and quite this tarnished! The finished machine would be road-tested in CMM and raise some money for charity – more of which later.

Tim Davies from Suzuki GB's Vintage Parts Programme knows the bike as it belonged to his brother Howard Davies before being sold to his friend Stuart Baker, who rode it until 2003 when he left it in his garden, before sadly passing away in 2013 from Marfan Syndrome. The bike was salvaged from the garden after a decade (literally) in the wilderness and with flora and fauna growing through and in it. With the blessing of Stuart's wife Tracie it was bought and restored, and has since raised a fair few quid in memory of Stuart, while also highlighting the brilliant job that the Vintage Parts Programme does with selling parts for our favourite old Suzuki classics.



Interestingly, for such a hefty lump of a bike, this GSX-R1100L had even been club raced back in the early 1990s, before going on the road and then being left in the garden.

Tim Davies explains: "When we went to collect the bike we couldn't even find it. It was completely overgrown with foliage and so much of it had rotted away!"

The bike, rusted and covered in moss and mould, was given to Suzuki's Apprentice Centre in Doncaster as a perfect restoration project and has since been brought back to its former glory with a lot of help from the Vintage Parts team. It's now a stunning example of a 1990 model.

Tim adds: "This bike has been a great tool for us to show how many parts are available for various Suzuki classic motorcycles and it was a great learning process for the many young apprentices who worked on the bike over the course of a year or so.

"We took the bike to the Motorcycle LIVE event, as well as classic shows and, of course, the recent Sywell Pistons and Props weekend."

It is hoped the completed bike will be sold or raffled in aid of the Marfan Trust, so if you want to make a donation to the Marfan Foundation go to: www.marfantrust.org

Keeway Superlight 125 (2020)

Keeway is part of the QuianJiang group (which also owns Benelli), one of the largest motorcycle manufacturers in China. Keeway makes smaller capacity machines, such as the Superlight SE 125cc cruiser we tested. The cruiser-style Superlight launched in 2017 and has remained largely unchanged.

Give me some spec:

A steel frame houses a single-cylinder 124cc engine putting out 10.46bhp/7.6kW @ 9,000rpm with maximum torque of 6.6lb-ft//8.9Nm @ 7,500rpm and an estimated top speed of around 65mph. Seat height is just 730mm, dry weight 134kg/295lb. Bringing the package to a halt is a single 275mm disc up front, supported by a single 160mm rear.

So what is it like to ride?

The first thing that strikes you are the dimensions. This doesn't look like a diddy 125. Lose the L plates and the Superlight is big enough to command some respect. It's quite broad in the saddle and the tall (baby ape?) bars seem strange at standstill.

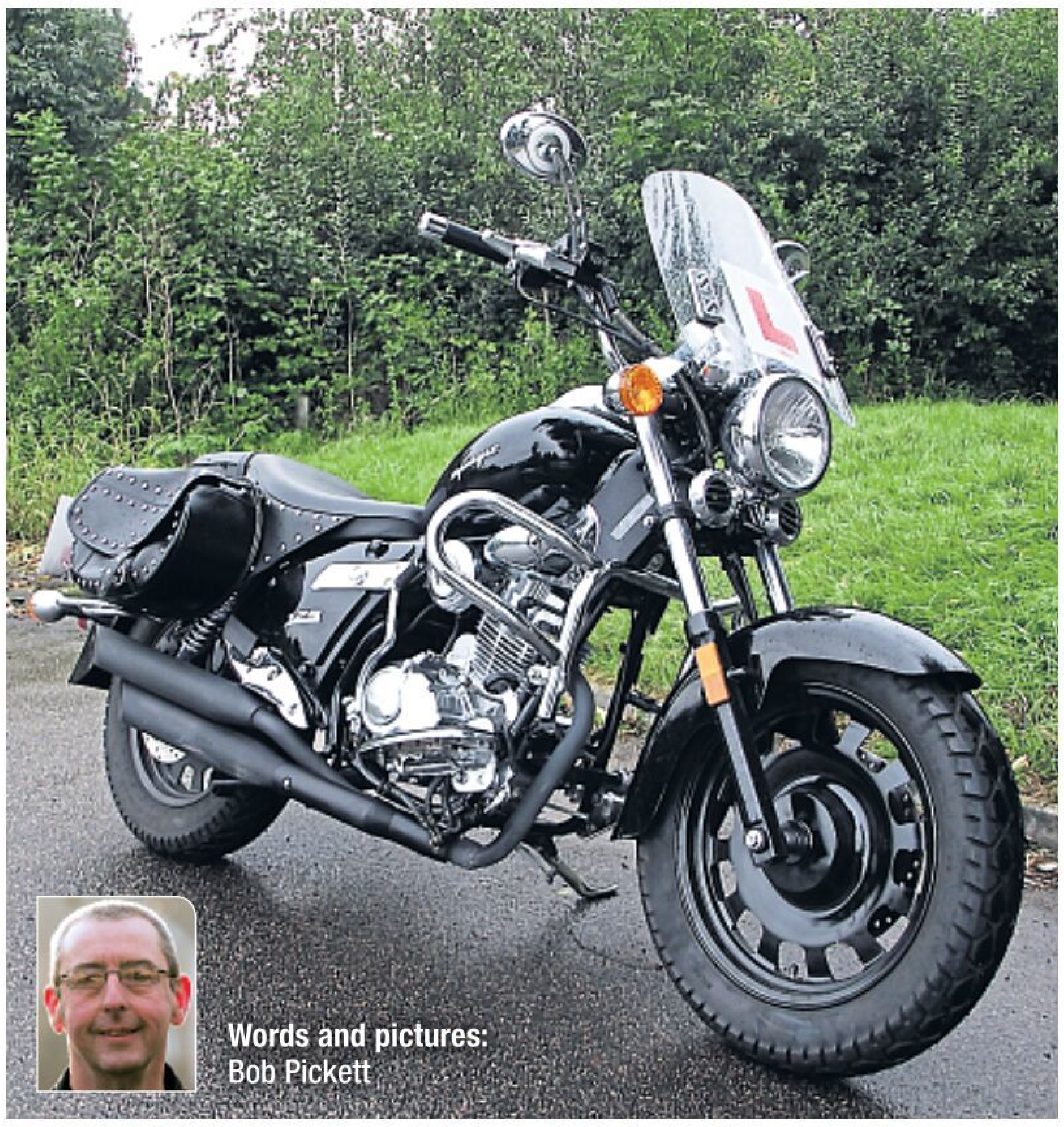
It has running boards rather than pegs; I was expecting heel-toe with boards, but it's a conventional up/down pedal.

Once moving (you start the Superlight OFF the side stand!), the next thing to strike is the stability. A lot of 125s are wibbly-wobbly, but the Superlight is nicely poised. It hums along cheerfully with minimal vibes unless at the top of the rev range. Okay, it's not going to win any races, but it builds pace nicely (there is fun in opening the throttle to the stops), never losing that poised feel. Those high bars make sense when cornering, aiding the Superlight around the bends. It holds a line nicely and even allowed a mid-corner adjustment with no fuss.

The gearbox is light and each change snicks into place without fuss (the dealer was going to tighten things up). Brakes do their job, no fuss, no excitement, aided by some proper engine braking.

Controls are good quality, with solid soft-touch buttons. Mirrors don't look big but I could see past my shoulders.

Cons were a slippy saddle, the decision to use Harley-style (but non auto-cancelling) indicator buttons on each side (right turns are a PITA unless your thumb is close to the button). And all those studs on the panniers? Plain options please (though they do have decent capacity). But I enjoyed riding the Superlight. It has real presence; taking it up to 60 it was poised and vibe free. It cornered nicely, and stopped in good time. I can think of worse ways of spending your 125 years.



Words and pictures:
Bob Pickett

Want to try one?

Bacons Motorcycles/East London Kawasaki
737-741 Eastern Avenue
Ilford, Essex
IG2 7RT
Tel: 020 8252 6020
www.baconsmotorcycles.co.uk/

What nick is it in?

Chinese build quality has massively improved. A bit of rubber is peeling on one running board; a strap came off a pannier; there is a small patch on the side of the saddle; and there is a scratch on the lower end can.

What's it worth?

The dealer wants £1,799 for a 2020 bike with 360 miles recorded (pre-test) and some cosmetic items. Dealer prices range from £1,990 for a 2019 bike with 3,850 miles logged to a 2021 model for £2,599 with 321 miles on the clock.

With thanks to Bacon's Motorcycles/East London Kawasaki for the loan of the bike.

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Does WK's Scrambler 125 prioritise style over substance, or does it go as well as it looks?

WORDS: Ross Mowbray **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Gary Chapman

Small capacity motorcycles and scooters are flying out of dealers at the minute; they're shifting them so fast they can't get more of them in quick enough. While the pandemic (and Brexit) might have momentarily slowed supply, the truth is that it's because more people are learning to ride bikes. The Government's push to get people off public transport last year seems to have done the world of good for two-wheeler sales – and we see no reason for things to change now we're getting back to normal.

As far as we're concerned two wheels is the best way to get about – and thankfully there's more choice from more manufacturers than ever before, with a range of styles and sizes to suit every type of rider. But there's one bike that we seem to see even more than most. The retro. They're everywhere – with stylish city slickers looking for a way to cut through traffic, country bumpkins too far away from a bus route, and old-school bikers after a playful run-around all snapping up a piece of the action. And the Scrambler 125 from WK is well worth a look.

Little bikes are big business. And WK Bikes knows it. It's known it for years. If you've not heard of it before, that's because the Lincolnshire-based importer is a relatively small presence in the UK market. It's only got five models in the line-up and they're all small capacity. It does also look after the CFMOTO brand in the UK, but that's another story for another time. Working directly with a factory in China with which it has sole production rights, WK has a hand in designing, testing and tweaking the bikes that it brings over. And it shows.

The Scrambler 125 is a well-put-together motorcycle. I had the chance to ride WK's Legend 125 a few years ago (it was essentially the predecessor to this bike; another retro-scrambler with good looks and very little off-road prowess) – and it's immediately clear that the build quality has come a long way since. The braided brake lines and digital dash are nice touches on what is, in essence, a bike that's been built to a budget. There's not much else in the way of equipment, aside from a grab rail for a pillion passenger.

It's a comfortable place to be, with an upright but relaxed riding position thanks to the bench-style seat and slightly upswept bars. There was just enough room for my 6ft 1in frame, but I have my doubts that taller riders (and possibly older riders… I'm still in my 20s and my joints are relatively pliant) might not get on so well. The suspension is soft. That's pretty much a given with any lower-end motorcycle, but it does well soaking up the lumps and bumps on some dodgy, torn-up back lanes without bouncing around all over the place. The brakes are capable enough. Not pin sharp with a load of feel, but offering plenty of bite to pull the lightweight 125 to a halt without too much thinking. It's actually a Combined Braking System, which means the front and back work simultaneously when you grab a handful or stamp on the pedal. Designed with the safety of new riders in mind, it might sound like a strange thing to get used to, but I didn't even have to think about it because the brakes worked well.

It handles well, too. It probably wouldn't be that happy being thrown around a racetrack (though on second thoughts that could actually be quite fun…), but it's plenty nimble enough to be pushed hard through a selection of fast bends and tight turns on my regular test route. The wide-ish bars help you throw it around and the Yuanxing nylon tyres offered a surprisingly decent level of grip. It was bone dry though and I'm not entirely sure if they'd be quite as compliant in the wet. Despite its Scrambler name it's most definitely a road bike. The rake of the front end, the lack of ground clearance (and sump guard) and its diminutive size all mean that it's never going to be much good when you're up on the pegs attempting to tackle some trails. I had a go though, you know, because it's called a Scrambler and because I wanted to. It's no worse than any other road bike, but no better either. You'd be best off forgetting about taking it off-road altogether as far as I'm concerned.

As you'd expect it's not the fastest bike in the world, nor is it anywhere close to being fast, but that's not what it's about. The WK Scrambler is a stylish little 125 that's perfect for pottering down back lanes and bombing about town. The single cylinder four-stroke engine will nip up to 50mph quite quickly, but 60mph is a bit harder to reach, with a long stretch of Tarmac and a bit of a tail-wind a great advantage. That said, there's enough poke to get away from the lights first if you keep your wits about you.

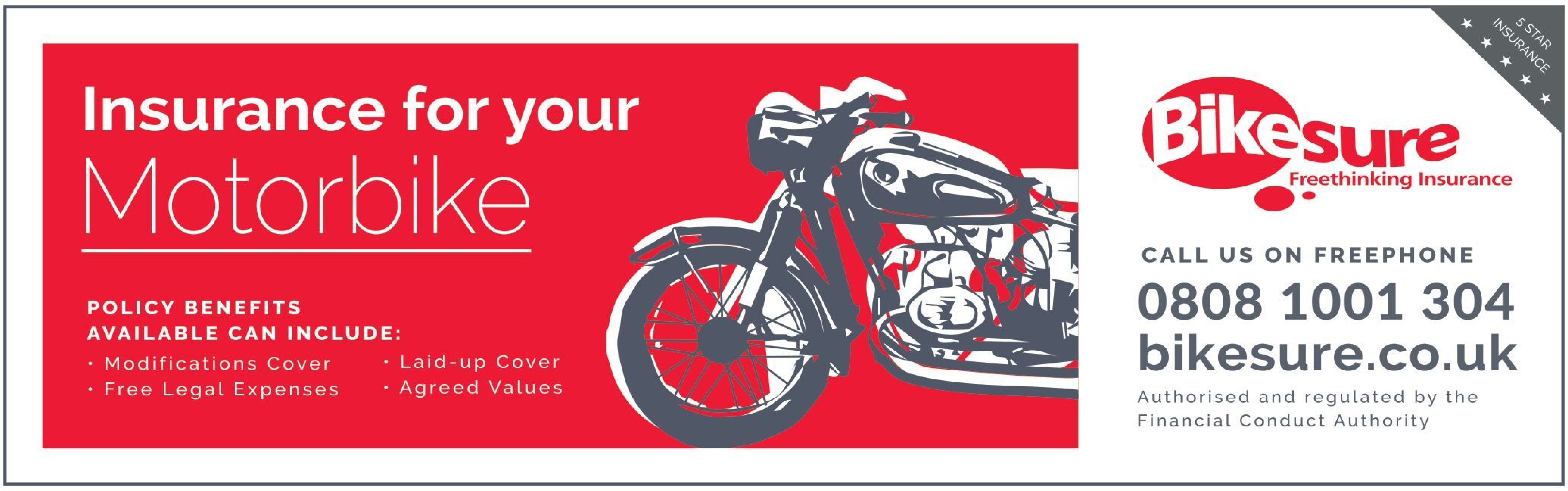
I've ridden a wide range of the retro-styled 'budget' bikes over the last few years, and the WK Scrambler 125 holds it own. For less than £2500 on the road and ready to go, there is very little to fault about the WK Scrambler 125. It's by no means the best bike on the market, but for a stripped-back, yet stylish, retro ride that's box fresh, you could definitely do a lot worse.

You could get a second-hand machine from a 'more established' manufacturer for similar money, but learner-legal bikes are so rarely looked after well that chances are you'd end up with something that's been thrashed, not serviced or left out in the rain (or all three). At least with the Scrambler you've got two years' parts and labour warranty to fall back on. Plus, WK has nearly 30 years of experience selling motorcycles, scooters and quads in the UK, with a huge UK spares service and an expanding dealer network, so rest assured that you'll be well looked after if you take the leap and opt for the WK.

TECH SPEC

WK Scrambler 125

ENGINE: 125cc single cylinder SOHC, 4-stroke
POWER: 11.6hp @ 8000rpm
SUSPENSION: (F) Telescopic forks
(R) Twin coil springs
BRAKES: (F) Hydraulic disc twin piston 280mm
(R) Hydraulic disc 190mm
WEIGHT: 130kg
TANK CAPACITY: 10 litres
PRICE: £2199 + OTR
CONTACT: www.wkbikes.com



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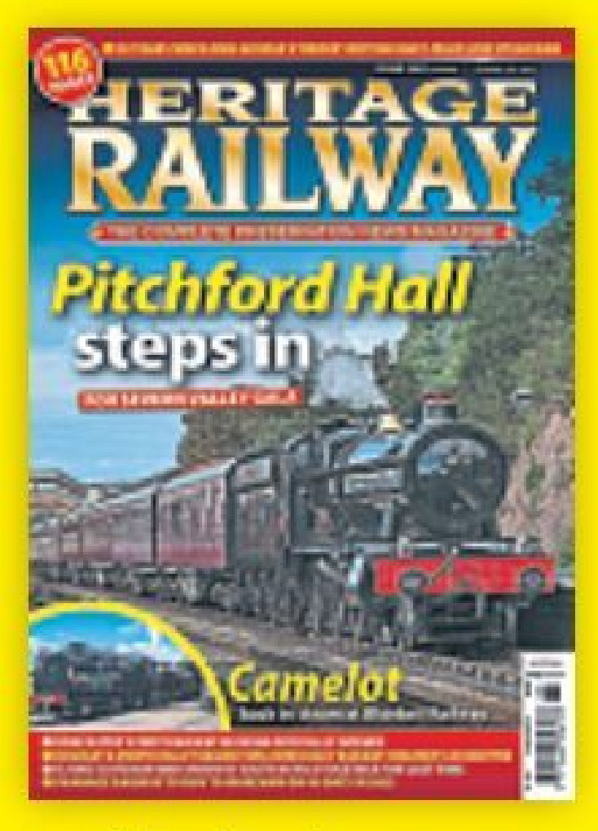

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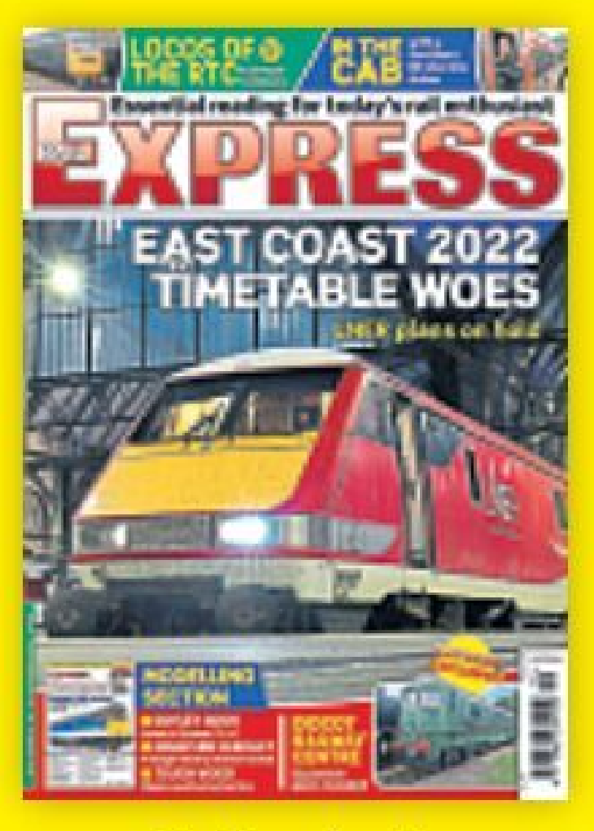

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WATT BIKE?

Welcome to Watt Bike. It's a standalone section that's dedicated to all things electric. We'll be bringing you news, products, guidance, tips, tricks and, most importantly, reviews of the latest and greatest electric bikes, scooters and pedelecs to come to market every single month.

THE KEY FACTS

If you're 14 or over, you can ride an 'electrically assisted pedal cycle' without the need for registration, tax or insurance. It must have pedals, and its motor should not propel the bike once it hits speeds of 15.5mph. If it's not an EAPC and is propelled without pedalling (or exceeds the 15.5mph speed limit), it will be classified as a motorcycle or moped. As a result you'll need a driving licence to ride one, and it'll also need to be registered, taxed and insured. Oh, and you'll need to wear a crash helmet, too. Simple.

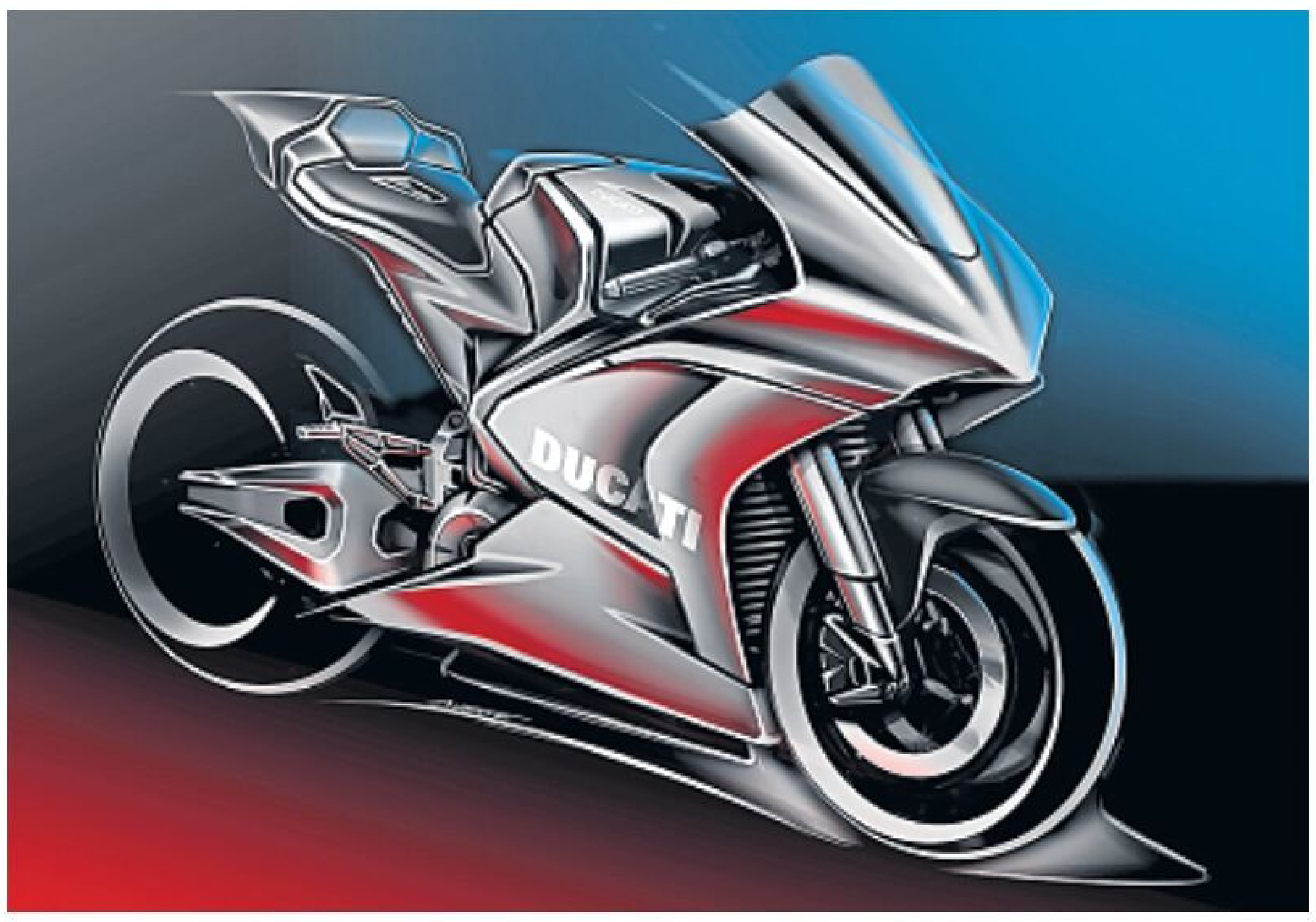
There is a bit of confusion about what sort of size of electric bike you can legally ride as you progress through the various licence categories. But it's not as complicated as it may first appear. Instead of paying attention to peak power like you would on a conventional petrol-powered motorcycle or scooter, UK regulations for electric machines focus on the amount of continuous power* available. That means you could buy a 11kW (15bhp) electric motorcycle or scooter, which is actually capable of delivering around 45kW (60bhp) of peak power. But because it doesn't make that power 'continuously', you'd still be able to ride it with your CBT certificate.

HOW TO CHARGE

There are a few different ways to charge up your motorcycle or scooter – but it all depends on the adaptors that come with your ride of choice. Most of the (cheaper) lower-powered machines can only be charged using your standard three-pin plug socket that you'd find in any home in the UK, and generally it's only the bigger and more expensive machines that can make full use of the network of fast chargers. Speaking of which, the public charging network is growing fast and at the time of printing there are over 45,000 connectors in the UK (according to www.zap-map.com). But it's still not as convenient as filling up, and there are many different operators, some pay as you go, some on subscription.

*Continuous power is defined as the amount of power the motor is capable of sustaining (continuously) for 30 minutes.

WATT BIKE? News



DUCATI to compete in MotoE from 2023

The Italian manufacturer will be the sole supplier of the MotoE World Championship from 2023. Could this be a sign that there's a production electric bike on the way from Ducati?

Ducati has just announced it's going electric with the news that it's going to be getting involved in MotoE from 2023. The Bologna-based brand has been beavering away building electric pedal-assisted bicycles for a few years (and has recently revealed a stand-up electric scooter), but there's been no news of an electric motorcycle. Until now.

The agreement between Dorna and Ducati is a big deal for many reasons. Firstly, it puts an end to the Championship's tie to Energica. Secondly, it confirms that Ducati is serious about electric motorcycles. And finally, it leads us to believe that there may be an electric production bike on the way from the iconic Italian manufacturer.

Although we still don't know anything about the bike that's going to be competing in the World Championship, we expect all the information will be released in the not-too-distant future. Here's what we do know…

Ducati will supply the grid with electric motorcycles for the MotoE World Championship starting from 2023 (which means we've got another year of Energica still to go).

The agreement lasts until 2026, which means that there will be (at least) four full seasons of Ducati's racing in MotoE.

Speaking about the news, Claudio Domenicali, CEO of Ducati Motor Holding said: "Lightness has always been in the Ducati DNA and thanks to the technology and chemistry of the rapidly evolving batteries we are convinced that we can achieve an excellent result.

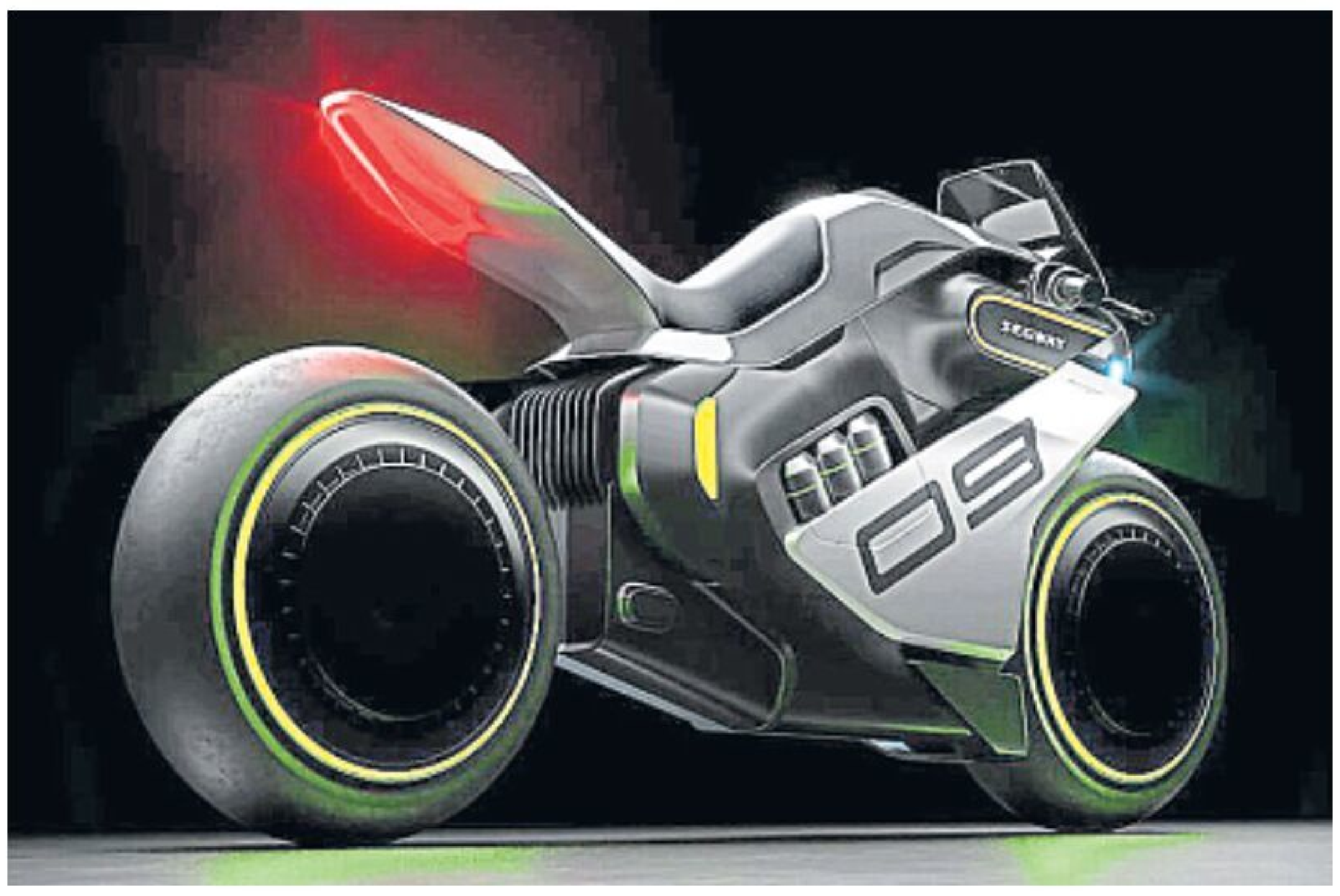
"We experiment with our innovations and our futuristic technological solutions on circuits all over the world and then make exciting and desirable products available to Ducatisti.

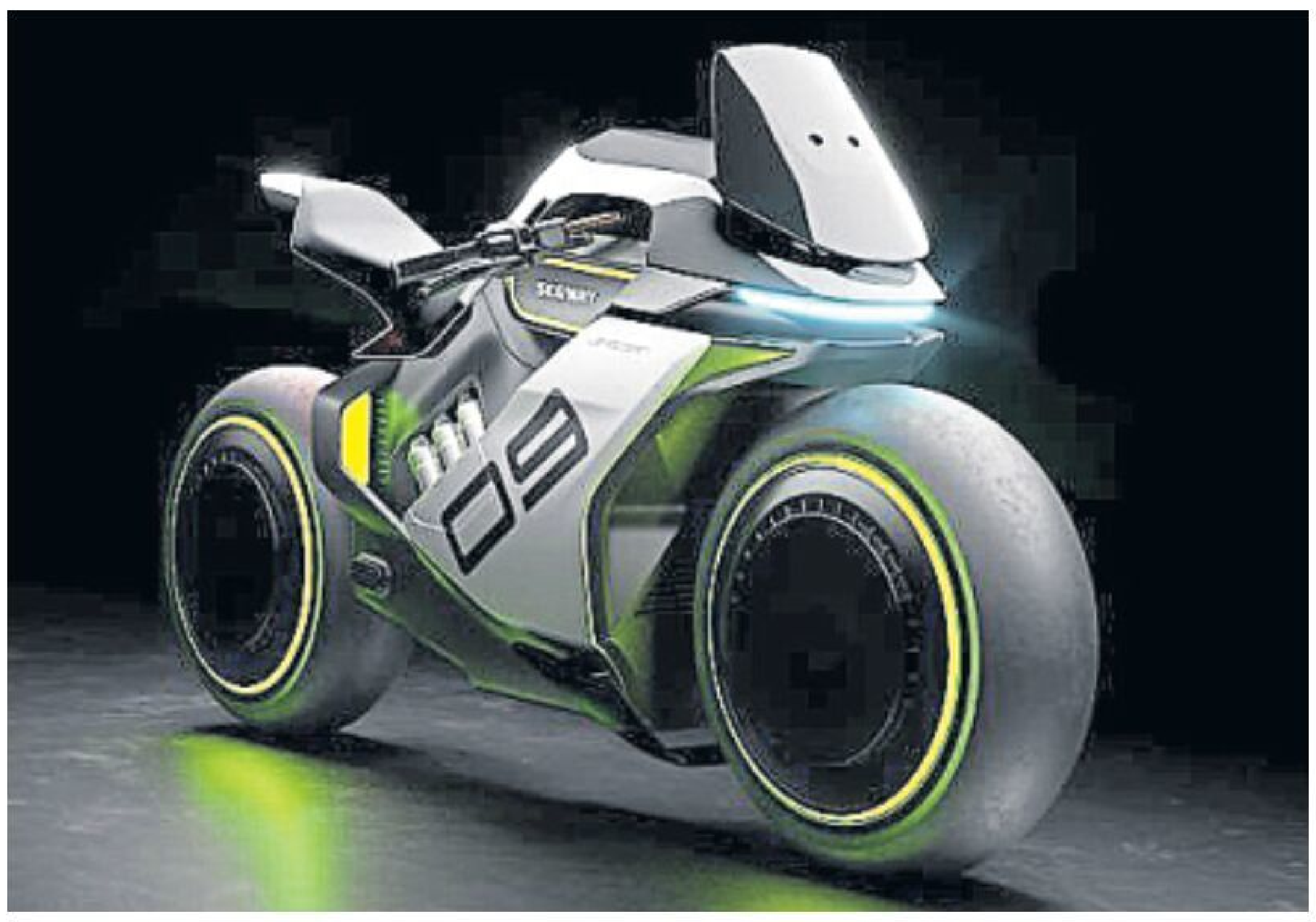
motoGP
GRAN PREMIO NOLAN DEL MADE IN ITALY E DELL'EMILIA-ROMAGNA
X-lite
X-lite

"I am convinced that once again we will treasure the experiences we have had in the world of competitions to transfer them and apply them also on production bikes."

Carmelo Ezpeleta, CEO of Dorna Sports, added: "We are very proud to announce that Ducati will be the new sole manufacturer for the FIM Enel MotoE World Cup. With their incredible history in the world of racing, it is a real honour to welcome this commitment and take on this new challenge together.

"We are eager to see what the future holds and continue to watch this technology develop and grow, with the MotoGP paddock and MotoE continuing to drive innovation and evolution in the motorcycling industry, while creating an incredible show on the track."





HYDROGEN POWERED: Segway's Apex H2

Chinese technology giant Xiaomi is launching a hydrogen-powered electric motorcycle under the Segway brand.

We brought you news of this funky sportbike for the future a few months ago but with more details emerging, we thought it was about time to take another look.

Owned by Chinese technology giant Xiaomi (the world's second largest manufacturer of smartphones), Segway's best known for its two-wheeled, self-balancing personal transport thing, but more recently it's decided to dip its toes into the world of motorcycles. At SEMA Las Vegas earlier this year it revealed its Dirt eBike X160 and X260 (which are motorcycle-cum-mountain bikes), but there's a bigger and better bike on the way, in the form of the Apex H2.

The electric/hyrodgen hybrid Segway has been crowdfunding since April this year, and although we're a way off seeing a finished bike in the flesh, we now know a little bit more. Looks-wise the Apex H2 takes the form of a fully-faired sportbike with a single-sided swingarm and some very futuristic styling – but it's underneath that things start to get really interesting. The Apex H2 carries a cartridge of hydrogen, which works to generate energy. We won't get too technical here, but it's an interesting solution to the ever-tightening emissions regulations which we've yet to see. The manufacturer suggests that consumption would equate to one gram of hydrogen per kilometre (and you'd be able to swap out the cartridge once you've run out of hydrogen). While there's no talk of range, Segway has said that it'll kick out 80hp, have a top speed of 93mph and cost less then 10 grand. That's pretty impressive. Whether the bike comes to fruition in 2023 remains to be seen, but with the big money backing of Xiaomi and the success of previous Segway projects, it'd be foolish to bet against it.

VanMoof's V: The electric bicycle that's so fast it breaks UK laws

Dutch electric bike manufacturer VanMoof has revealed its first 'hyperbike' – and it looks great. But there's a problem. It's too fast to ride on UK roads and cycle paths.

If you're in the know about the rules and regulations surrounding electric bikes, you'll be aware that UK law currently restricts all pedal-assist machines to a maximum speed of 15.5mph. That doesn't mean that the bikes can't go faster than that, but once you hit the limit the electric assist stops working and any extra momentum is gained from pedal power alone (or gravity if you're going downhill).

That's not a problem for most electric bike manufacturers. They know the rules and play by them. But VanMoof has decided 15.5mph just isn't enough, and has created a bike that's capable of helping you go even faster. More specifically, the VanMoof V will be able to reach a top speed of 31mph (which is double the current legal limit).

There's a reason for it though. VanMoof has taken a calculated risk, hoping that by the time it starts shipping the bike at the end of next year, there might be a change to the rules which would mean that commuters would be able to use it on the road. Although there's been no news of such a thing happening at this stage, the electric market is constantly evolving, and quite often it's the regulations that are last to catch up.

VanMoof reckons its new V electric bike could be a perfect alternative to a car for those living in built-up urban environments, and it believes that the faster speeds (coupled with an extended range) would make it more plausible for more people to commute. It makes perfect sense to us, but whether or not the UK Government see it the same way remains to be seen.

Speaking about the news, Ties Carlier, Co-Founder of VanMoof, said: "The VanMoof V is our first hyperbike, an e-bike dedicated to higher speed and longer distance. I believe this new type of high-speed e-bike can fully replace scooters and cars in the city by 2025."

At this stage VanMoof hasn't confirmed the exact specifications of its newest bike, but it has revealed it'll get a 700 Wh capacity battery. If we take a look at VanMoof's S3 which has a 504 Wh and an estimated range of 37-93 miles, it seems plausible that the VanMoof V could be capable of covering over 120 miles from a single charge. That'd be more than enough for any city slickers looking to commute on two wheels. More evidence that the VanMoof V has been designed for longer rides is the redesigned frame which is complemented by front and rear suspension (which is a first for a VanMoof machine).

It'll also get built-in theft protection, which is essentially a sensor which will automatically trigger an alarm if it detects that someone is attempting to move the bike after it has been locked up (using the VanMoof app). Riders will also be able to track its location using the 'Find My' app which is built in to all Apple products (but there's no news about what to do if you have an Android OS).

There's no doubt the bike is a serious proposition which could make commuting by electric bike even easier. However, whether or not it'll be legal by the time it goes on sale remains to be seen.

COP26: Harley-Davidson's LiveWire goes on patrol in Glasgow

Coppers in Scotland have been keeping things environmentally friendly, patrolling the COP26 climate summit on a fleet of Harley-Davidson LiveWire electric motorcycles. And the beat goes on...

There's been a lot in the news over the last few weeks about the COP26 climate summit (or the United Nations Climate Change Conference, if you prefer). And the eagle-eyed among you might have spotted a motorcycle or two escorting VIPs at the event.

We won't get into the specifics of what went on at COP26, which is widely considered to be the most important international climate summit to date. We'll focus our attention on the bikes chosen by the Scottish Police to keep an eye on things at the conference. In keeping with the ethos of the climate summit, Police Scotland made full use of a fleet of specially prepared all-electric Harley-Davidson LiveWires.

Kitted out by technical teams from Harley-Davidson Europe and Harley-Davidson dealers in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the LiveWires spent a couple weeks escorting VIPs, answering emergency calls and making sure things ran smoothly throughout the event.

As explained by Police Scotland Superintendent Darren Faulds: "Where possible we have taken measures to ensure that COP26 is policed in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. Our work to improve our sustainability has been enhanced thanks to the support of Harley-Davidson, and we welcome these electric motorcycles as an addition to our existing road policing assets to help with the delivery of a safe and secure event."

The near £30,000 Harley-Davidson has been widely praised for its sharp handling, punchy power delivery and stylish looks, but its battery range when ridden at consistently high speeds has been flagged as one of the problems by punters who might consider making the switch to electric. But with a range of under 150 miles when ridden at slower speeds in town, the LiveWire seems like the perfect choice for policing the event.

It's not the first time a police force has gone electric. BMW recently showed off a police patrol version of its concept CE04 and Zero Motorcycles' range has become a popular choice for police departments in the USA. It'll be interesting to see if the LiveWire remains on Glasgow's fleet or if the bikes were only ever intended to be used to police COP26.

Honda's SWAPPABLE motorcycle batteries

Whilst there's no doubt of the value of electric motorcycles and scooters in towns and cities, there's been a lot of debate about the plausibility of going electric for serious riders who like to cover big miles.

The thing that's always highlighted as the main problem is the limited range and the limited availability of suitable charging facilities. You can't really argue with that.

If you wanted to travel from London to Scotland on an electric bike in a single day, you're going to be covering hundreds of miles. That means you're going to have to stop multiple times and charge your bike. That charge might only take half-an-hour, but if you're travelling at motorway speeds, you're going be running the battery down incredibly quickly. And then you're going to need to stop again and repeat the process and wait for another half-an-hour. But there might be another option in the not-too-distant future.

A group of the biggest names in motorcycling has signed an agreement to standardise motorcycle batteries for electric motorcycles, because they reckon that swapping the battery for another one is going to be the best way to help people keep moving.

The first to come from the collaboration is Honda's eMaaS swappable battery system.

Of course, it's only the first step in a very complicated process. The big problem is that you're going to need some serious infrastructure in place to make swapping your battery the easiest option.

Honda also wants its batteries and charging system to be powered by renewable energy, with it being plugged back into the grid if needed (during a power cut).

At this stage it's just a concept and we're still yet to see designs from the other manufacturers in the consortium, but it's an interesting first step from the Japanese manufacturer. We're looking forward to seeing who comes up with what next.

Honda Mobile Power Pack e specs

External dimensions (mm): Approx. 298×177.3×156.3
Battery type: Lithium-ion
Rated voltage: Approx. 50.26V
Rated capacity: 26.1Ah/1314Wh
Weight: 10.3kg
Charging time: Approx. 5 hours

AM
LICENCE

ELECTRIC VESPA

The iconic Italian brand has reinvented its scooter for the 21st century. Here's what you need to know about the battery-powered Elettrica.

WORDS: Ross Mowbray **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Dave Manning

There's still a lot of scepticism among bikers that electric motorcycles are a plausible option for serious riders looking to make the switch from petrol power. They exclaim about the difficulty of covering even moderate miles due to the limitations inflicted by charging times and the limited charging infrastructure. They probably have a point. It's a different way of doing things, and it does make it difficult to cover hundreds and hundreds of miles in a single sitting.

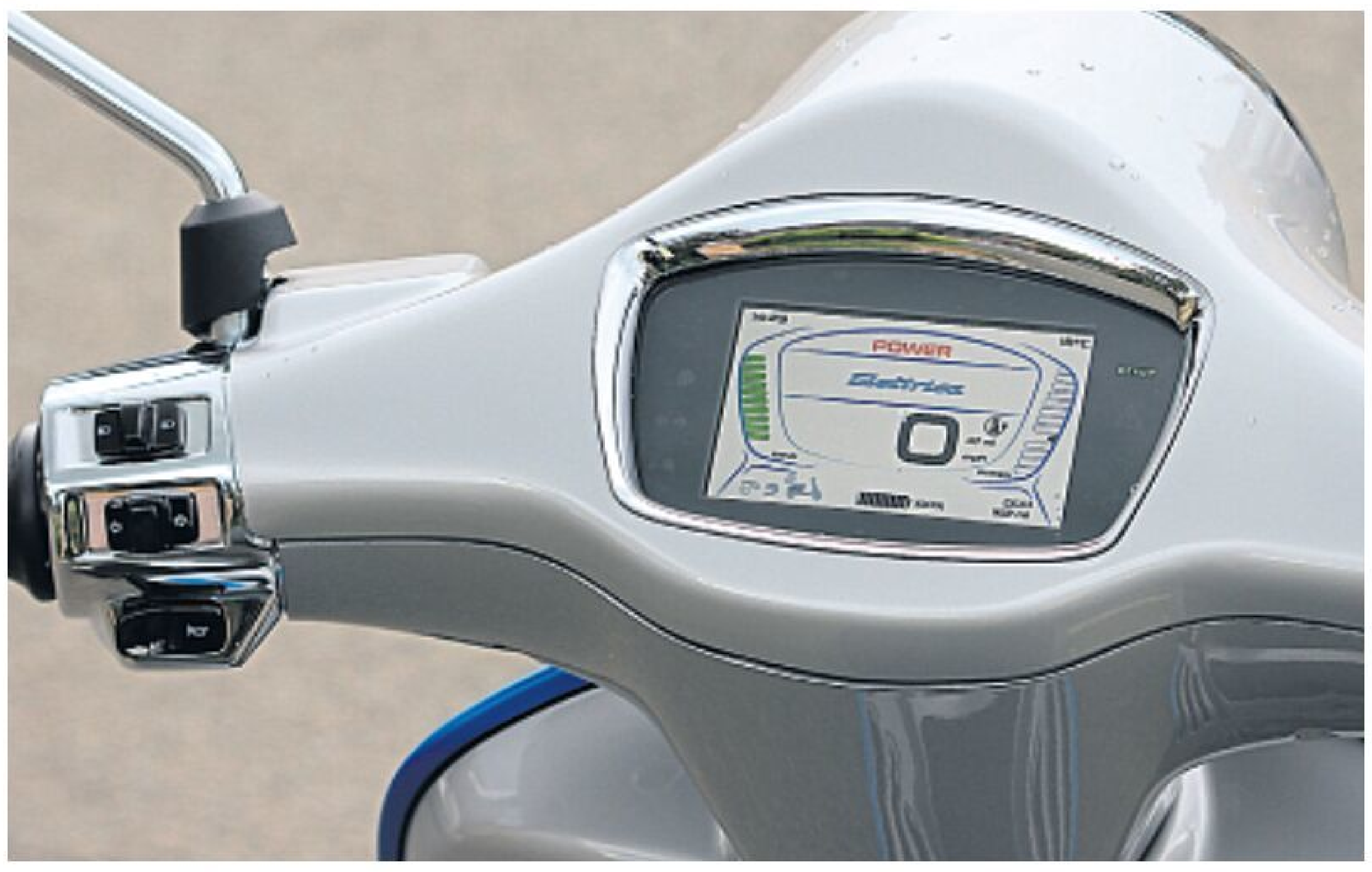
How many riders actually do that is another conversation altogether, but there is one place where it's widely agreed (even by staunch petrol-heads) that electric two-wheelers make sense. Towns and cities.

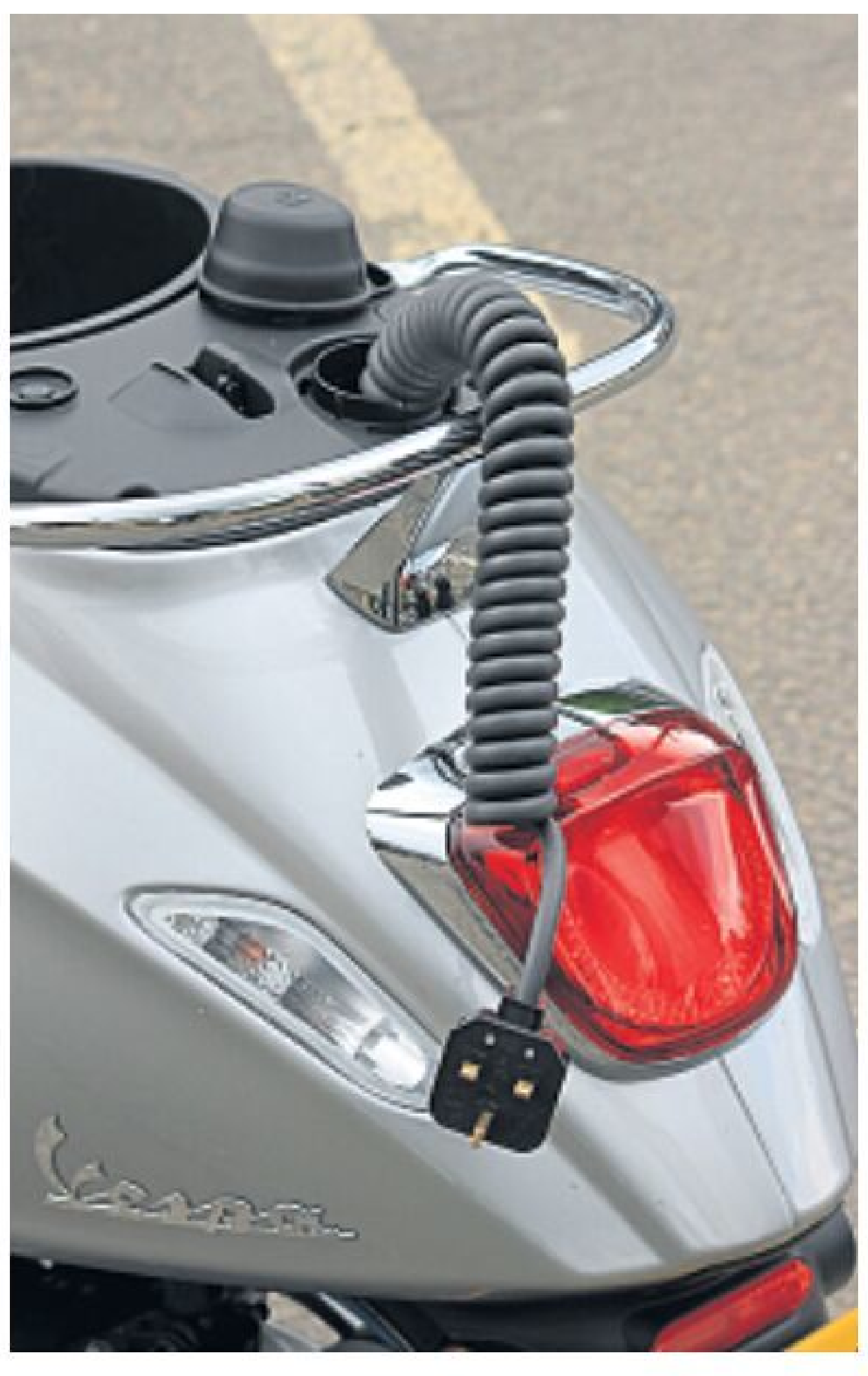
If you're not covering big distances and instead you're planning to nip about in an urban environment, then there's no denying the effectiveness of an electric motorcycle or scooter… and that's without mentioning the ever-tightening emissions regulations that are being rolled out with increasing vigour.

That's probably part of the reason why sales of electric scooters and motorcycles are growing every year in the UK. While they may only make up a very small percentage of the market (2.5% in 2020), the MCIA reports that sales for the first 10 months of 2021 are up by 160% compared to the previous year. That's nothing to be sniffed at. It seems battery power is here to stay.

The scooter market's particularly interesting in the UK. You'd think it'd be comparatively straightforward for a 'big name' manufacturer to create an electric scooter from the bones of one of their existing rides. But that's not really what's happened. Yes, there are plenty of manufacturers looking for a slice of the action, but up until now the market's been dominated by technology start-ups and Chinese-imported machines. The bigger names in the game have been mostly missing in action leaving companies such as SuperSoco, NIU and Sur-Ron to clean up. But there is a scooter that bucks the trend, from a company that's been one of the biggest names in the scooter market for 75 years. It's the Vespa Elettrica.

First launched back in 2018 with 4.2kWh lithium-ion battery and moped-level performance, it was joined by a slightly faster version in 2019 (that's actually only a few hundred quid more expensive). It's not exactly been a resounding





TECH SPEC

Vespa Elettrica

Price: £6300
Engine: Brushless electric with kinetic energy recovery system
Power: 3.5kW (4kW at peak)
Torque: 200Nm
Battery: 4.2kWh lithium
Battery voltage: 48V
Battery capacity: 86Ah
Recharge time: 4 hours w/ 220V
Suspension: (F) Single-arm fork w/ coil spring and hydraulic monoshock absorber (R) Hydraulic monoshock absorber
Tyres: (F) Tubeless 110/70 12in (R) Tubeless 120/70 11in
Brakes: (F) Hydraulically operated 200mm stainless steel disc (R) Mechanically operated 140mm drum brake
Seat height: 790mm
Weight: 130kg
Contact: www.vespa.com

> “It is Vespa. It is well built. And it does go well, too. But no matter how sophisticated and easy to ride it is, it’s still way too expensive for the average commuter.”

success so far, with less than a hundred sold from its release until the start of 2021, but Vespa made the decision to get involved in the electric ‘revolution’ early on. We had our eye on it when it was first released, with its chrome bodywork and traditional Vespa styling helping it to stand out from the crop of more utilitarian commuter scooters from other manufacturers, and now we’ve finally had the chance to swing our leg over the ‘moped’ version and see how well it goes on the road.

First things first, let’s talk about the motor. The Elettrica kicks 4kW (or 5.2bhp in old money). It’s not a lot, but it’s bang on the money for a well-put-together moped. The torque’s a different story altogether, with an impressive 200Nm to play with. It sounds a lot – and it is – but you have to remember it’s ‘just’ a moped and as a result it’s not as quick off the line as the numbers might suggest. It will get up to the 30mph limit fairly quickly, and it’ll comfortably sit there even when you hit a hill, but you’d be best off avoiding any major roads and instead stick to towns and cities.

The 4.2kWh battery helps to offer a claimed 62 miles of range. We think that’s optimistic and if you’re riding flat out you’d easily drain the whole thing in half that time. That said, 30 miles is still a respectable distance for a learner-legal moped and chances are most riders wouldn’t be covering that kind of distance on a regular basis. To charge it up you’ll need to remove the battery from the scooter and connect it to a three-pin domestic plug socket. Although it’s a bit of a faff lugging it around, it does mean you can charge it pretty much anywhere, which Piaggio claims will take a total of four hours.

Handling is good. It’s planted and agile in equal measure, with the conventional front forks and single rear shock (which offers pre-load adjustment) doing their best to soak up the worst of the road. It’s not the most plush of rides, but for round town it’s more than adequate. The 12-inch wheels and short wheelbase mean it’s happiest nipping in and out of traffic rather than sitting flat out on open roads.

Stopping is looked after by a drum brake at the rear and a 240mm disc up front. There’s no ABS or CBS, and it’s none the worse for it. It stops easily enough and there’s plenty of feel to make tight turns a doddle.

Despite its technological prowess, the Elettrica’s a fairly simple affair. There is a reverse gear, but aside from that the dash is the only other feature of note. It prioritises the speedometer and battery gauge, but it also offers the choice to scroll between max/average speed, power consumption, an odometer and a trip. Oh, and there’s smartphone connectivity, too. The location of the battery also means that there’s still some storage space under the seat like a traditional scooter. It’s a nice touch and there’s room for an open face helmet (and little else).

There’s no denying that the Vespa Elettrica is expensive. Costing £6300 and £6600 respectively, the good news is that you can access the UK Government’s Plug-In Grant which knocks a bit off the price – but even then you’ll still have to fork out a fairly hefty £5040 or £5280.

That’s significantly more than any other electric moped/scooter on the market. It is Vespa. It is well built. And it does go well, too.

But no matter how sophisticated and easy to ride it is, it’s still way too expensive for the average commuter. I think Vespa knows that. It sees the Elettrica as a flagship ‘exclusive’ electric scooter, and that’s probably why its parent company Piaggio has just released a more affordable electric scooter itself.

We’ll be riding that as soon as we get the chance.

HUSQVARNA VITPILEN 701

HIPSTER HAVOC

Husqvarna's Vitpilen 701 may look like it'd be best suited poncing around the streets of Shoreditch, but as we found out, it really is a wolf in sheep's clothing…

Low Fuel Level
VITPILEN

WORDS: Carl Stevens **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Gary Chapman

There's a lot to be said for the hipster lifestyle, and those who lap it up – you know, the ones who like to spend excessive amounts of cash on things like beard oils, vapes and retro-spec clothes. As I'm sure you can tell quite easily from my barnet, dress sense and lack of smoke, I'm definitely not one of them. Mind you, it's not all bad. After all, I'm pretty sure hipsters discovered craft beer which is ace, and I am partial to some posh shapes on my cappuccinos every now and again. Oh, and now it looks like they've inspired the updated Vitpilen 701 from Husqvarna as well.

So what is it, and why on earth is it in Fast Bikes magazine? Well ladies and gents, don't let your eyes deceive you. Although this may look like the sort of machine that's only good for a quick trip for an overpriced beard trimming, underneath that seriously snazzy looking bodywork, it's anything but.

See, Husqvarna have dug into their parent company KTM's warehouse and stolen the incredibly naughty chassis and engine combo from the 690 Duke R; you know, the willy-waving single-cylinder savage that we've come to absolutely adore over the years… which is handy as the Austrians have decided that they don't want to keep it in their range any more.

That means that the Husky packs 75 horses and 72Nm of torque, which isn't at all bad when you take into account that it's housed in a minuscule, lightweight steel trellis frame. But that's not all, oh no. See, they really haven't done things by halves. Husqvarna have gifted the Vitpilen with a ride-by-wire throttle, 'shifter and 'blipper, Brembo stoppers (with Bosch ABS), adjustable WP pogos and a slipper clutch, which is a pretty impressive haul for just a smidge over seven-and-a-half grand. Husky have then given the Vit a posh cloak to finish off, alongside some 17in spoked wheels and CNC pegs… because, well, it wouldn't be hip without some over-the-top styling and swish curves, would it? Well, the only thing left to do was see if the Husky's riding could back up its bold aesthetics. And you know what? It surprised us, big time…

I have to admit, when the Vitpilen was released I really wasn't too sure about it. I couldn't quite get my head around whether it was trying to be curvy or sharp with that funny fuel tank, and the whole café racer thing? Well, I'd take an aggressive naked appearance over one any day of the week. Yet, graced with the Vitpilen in front of me for the first time in the flesh, I've got to say it looked pretty smart. Maybe I'm getting old, or my hair's getting a bit long, but as the sun beamed down on those strange lines and that snazzy blue colour scheme, I actually couldn't take my eyes off the thing; everything from the rounded headlight to those spoked wheels just seemed to work together, creating a pretty tasty looking machine. And no, I wasn't drunk.

TECH SPEC

Husqvarna Vitpilen 701

Engine
Type: 692cc single-cylinder four stroke
Bore x stroke: 105mm x 80mm
Compression: 12.8:1
Fuelling: Electronic injection
Claimed power: 75hp @ 8500rpm
Claimed torque: 71Nm @ 6750rpm
Electronics
Riding modes: No
Traction control: Yes
ABS: Yes
Quickshifter/Autoblipper: Yes/Yes
Wheelie control: No
Launch control: No
Chassis
Frame: Steel trellis frame
Front suspension: 43mm WP USD forks
Rear suspension: WP monoshock
Front brakes: Four-piston fixed caliper, 320mm disc
Rear brake: Single-piston floating caliper, 240mm disc
Dimensions
Wheelbase: 1434mm
Seat height: 830mm
Dry weight: 157kg
Fuel capacity: 12 litres
Price: £7549
From: www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

WARNING
Husqvarna
LIFT
ACHTUNG
IMPORTANT

Up close, the Vit looked smart as well. We have to keep in mind that this thing is under eight grand so it's not going to be gold-plated, but even so the welds looked nice, the finish is smart and little details like the snazzy fuel cap and the Husky logo etched into the seat make it look like some thought has gone into it, rather than just being the sum of a part-bin special… although a colour dash would be nice. From afar, the seating position looked like it might be a bit awkward but perching on top for the first time it was anything but; I have to admit, I was rather surprised. I'm always forgetting how small a single-cylinder engine can be, but having the Husky between my legs for the first time almost felt like I was sitting on top of a nice big toy; the seat height was low, the chassis felt mightily thin and even my tiny legs managed to get both feet on the floor, which is a seriously rarity on most things (that aren't mini motos) these days.

Having a café racer-type silhouette, I was expecting my first reach of the 'bars to be a bit uncomfortable and awkward, but for some reason the seating position on the Vit felt absolutely ace from the get-go. The 'bars were in a lovely position, as were the controls, and there's even a nice view where the top yoke and adjustable pogos are concerned. Okay, the circular analogue dash is fairly old school compared with a lot of the TFT stuff we see in today's modern age, but even still, the 701 somehow manages to pull it off with that whole 'minimalistic' vibe. Mind you, minimalistic isn't quite how I'd describe that exhaust note. I'm not sure about you lot, but the thumping soundtrack of a single is incredibly distinctive, and the first time I hit the ignition button I was surprised at those throaty chugs that emerged.

Alas, it was a welcome addition to my ears and with some city miles in store before I hit the open road, I was excited to see how the Husky would hold up in what I thought would be its natural habitat, of the hustle and bustle…

And you know what? It didn't really set the world on fire in terms of the slow stuff. Don't get me wrong, from the outset the Husky was incredibly nimble with loads of steering lock, and unlike a lot of systems the 'shifter and 'blipper worked incredibly well the whole way through the rev range. Yet even so, the throttle is a little bit snatchy at the bottom end and the standard set up on that WP suspension was fairly stiff, especially if you've bought one for bumbling around town in a bomber jacket.

> "It's a good all-rounder, with some serious zest."

FAST BIKES

OUT NOW

If you like your bikes fast and your kneesliders mullered, you'll probably want to get your hands on a copy of Fast Bikes. Each month we go farther, faster and fuller with our in-depth, honest and insightful new and used bike tests. As well as regular trackday advice, tested kit and all the latest goss from the world of two wheels, you can also expect to find monthly buyers' guides, new product overviews and money-can't-buy interviews from some of the greatest names in motorcycle racing. Whether you're a naked bike lover, a pure-sports addict or someone that simply wants to discover great rides at home or away, we've got you covered… fast! So head to your local news outlet today, or www.fastbikesmag.com to check out what offers we've got in store for you.

A2 AWESOMENESS
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WINNER

I'm not complaining yet though, as that meant (and to my surprise) it just felt incredibly eager to be ragged and set loose; like I really was sitting on a wolf in sheep's clothing. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't the worst thing in the world by a long shot when trawling round in traffic, but I was surprised that the 701 didn't handle the slow-speed city hustle better. But then again, once I fed the Vitpilen some open roads, that's exactly where it came into its own.

Thanks to how those clip-on style 'bars are positioned, the long seat and the slightly higher pegs, the Husky seriously knows how to hustle when it hits the twisties. Yeah, the WP suspension felt hard at slow speed, and I wasn't a big fan of speed bumps and pot holes, but when pushed on it gives an incredible amount of feedback, especially mid-corner, as the 701 dives into corners with ease, and holds a line as good as any other middleweight naked… or perhaps better. In all honesty, if it was mine I'd probably mess around with the pogos a little bit, but even so, it really did perform like a weapon. In fact, it was so surprising I even went and got my strap-on sliders out of the lock-up for good measure, and that does not happen often! As for the brakes, well, they weren't the worst I'd ever abused, but they weren't the best; the ABS does enjoy stopping the fun very early on when anchoring up hard, which was a pain. I'd love to be able to turn it off, but the fun police put a stop to that with all the new homologation rules (unless you do a quick burnout, and knock out all of the electronics, which is something we'd obviously never do). Mind you, the traction control can be turned off, and turned off with ease after a quick Google with a single rubber button on the dash, and I've got to say with some free rein, the Vitpilen is every bit the basket case the 690 Duke was. Although of course we'd never pull any wheelies on Her Majesty's highways, it feels like the Husky was just constantly screaming for first, second and even third gear mingers (yes, third!), all thanks to the torque-y delivery from that 692cc motor.

And in all honesty, it doesn't feel snatchy at all when it gets cracked open, because it's got a fun amount of power that can constantly be thrashed. Yeah, it might only be packing 75 horses in that little frame, but even so the Husky really does punch its way between corners, and thanks to the big ol' lump of torque, it does so with serious amounts of urgency nearly anywhere in the rev range.

Mind you, it wasn't even just its corner-hunting aggression, nor its fun-loving nature that surprised me the most. I ended up doing more than 120 miles on the motorway on the 701, and besides the lack of wind protection (as it's a naked, obvs) it was actually rather pleasant, considering. When I got off, my ass wasn't too badly in tatters, my knuckles weren't dragging on the floor, and I hadn't gone insane from an annoyingly buzzy engine noise – it turns out that the Vitpilen isn't just a gimmick, but can munch some fairly hefty mileage with ease. Well, until that mini fuel tank runs out of juice.

But then again, things like the fuel range are a bit immaterial on a bike like this; people are going to buy it on the looks and the scene alone, and according to Husky UK, they can't make enough of 'em. And you know what? I'm not surprised. Sure, it's not the quickest bike, nor is it the nicest commuter, but it's a good all-rounder, with some serious zest.

Conclusion

Before I jumped on, I didn't really know what to expect. I mean, would it be an absolute hoot to ride like the KTM 690 Duke it's based on, or would it just be an uncomfortable fashion statement? Well, thankfully it was a mixture of the two, minus the uncomfortable. If you're moving over to the dark side (or renting a flat in Shoreditch) but still enjoy riding like a twat, the Vitpilen is the bike for you; it's got the KTM edge, loves a corner just as much as its owner will love a cappuccino, and looks the part if you're on the café racer hype. But if you're not bothered by its looks, I'd still go down the regular naked route, and save some cash in the process.

SPECIALIST SPOTLIGHT: ARAI

This month we're taking a look at the iconic Japanese helmet manufacturer. Here's what you need to know.

WORDS: Bob Pickett **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Arai Europe / Freddie Dobbs (@Dob.bs)

In the 1950s there were no helmet makers in Japan. Hirotake Arai, a keen biker, decided to make a helmet to protect himself and friends. A hat maker, he knew heads came in all sorts of shapes and sizes, so a range of helmets was needed.

Hirotake-San did not intend to make motorcycle helmets as a commercial venture, but a new direction for his company made this inevitable.

Arai began constructing safety helmets for workers, using a method of heat-forming resin, before manufacturing with Fibre Reinforced Plastics (FRP). The techniques learned led Arai into motorcycle helmet manufacture in 1952. Initially creating helmets for professional Japanese off-road racers, commercial production commenced in 1956.

1958 saw production of motorcycle helmets with FRP outer shell and inner Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) liner. the standard method to this day. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Arai implemented several innovations, including a movable chin piece, one-touch open/close face shield, brow ventilation, and easy visor change without the need for tools.

US expansion took place in the 60s with European markets taking off in the 70s. Arai Helmet Europe was established in Hoevelaken, The Netherlands in 1978, where it is still based.

Each Arai helmet is hand made (to earn the right to make an Arai helmet takes up to five years' training), taking up to 18 hours following a 27-point production process. Each helmet then has to pass five separate quality control checks: two in-process safety checks, after the shell is made, after painting and graphics and after final assembly.

Arai helmets feature an 'organic' shape outer shell, providing a natural appearance, conforming more to the head's natural shape for improved comfort, seal fit and minimising turbulence. Arai provides one size outer shell for each two-helmet sizes for most models; with different shaped outer shells for different models it is almost impossible not to find the right fit.

A hugely important development is the new Quantic, the first helmet to pass the new more stringent ECE R22.06 certification.

All Arai helmets come with a five-year limited warranty.

Where?

Arai head office is in Tokyo, Japan, with its European base at Hoevelaken in The Netherlands.

Cost?

Arai makes a vast range of helmets, broken down into categories:

- **Race:** Debut (£399.99) to the RX-7V RC (£2,799.99)
- **Sports Touring:** Debut (£329.99) to the Quantic (£499.99 plain, £599.99 colours)
- **Street:** Profile (£379.99) to the Rapide (£529.99)
- **Adventure:** Tour-X 4 Frost (£499.99) to the Tour-X 4 Twin (£599.99)
- **City:** Freeway Classic (£269.99) to the SZ-R VAS (£629.99)
- **Classic:** Freeway Classic (£269.99) to the Urban V (£449.99)

THE 'R75 SHAPE'

Arai's incident studies led to a simple philosophy: 'The higher the energy, the higher the need for glancing off objects.' This 'glancing off' allows better impact absorption; the more energy you avoid sending into the helmet, the more absorption capacity in reserve.

The smooth outer shell of Arai helmets is designed to glide without unnecessary resistance; Arai vents and ducts are designed to break off during an impact.

A very strong outer shell spreads impact forces, a soft inner shell absorbs remaining energy.

The multiple-density EPS inner shell is made using a unique technology combining three to five densities in various areas as a single component.

The RX-7V (R75) Variable Axis System (VAS) is the latest development. The smoother area around the temple was increased by an average of 24mm because of the shell modification on the VAS model; a larger, smoother shell over a wider area increases the ability to divert more energy.

CONTACT

Web: www.whyarai.co.uk
Facebook: Arai Helmets UK
Twitter: @WhyArai
Instagram: whyarai

Arai Quantic

£499.99 to £599.99

TESTED

The Quantic is the first helmet to pass the ECE R22-06 standard. Designed as a sports-touring helmet, the Quantic features a 12 port (6 intake, 6 exhaust) ventilation system.

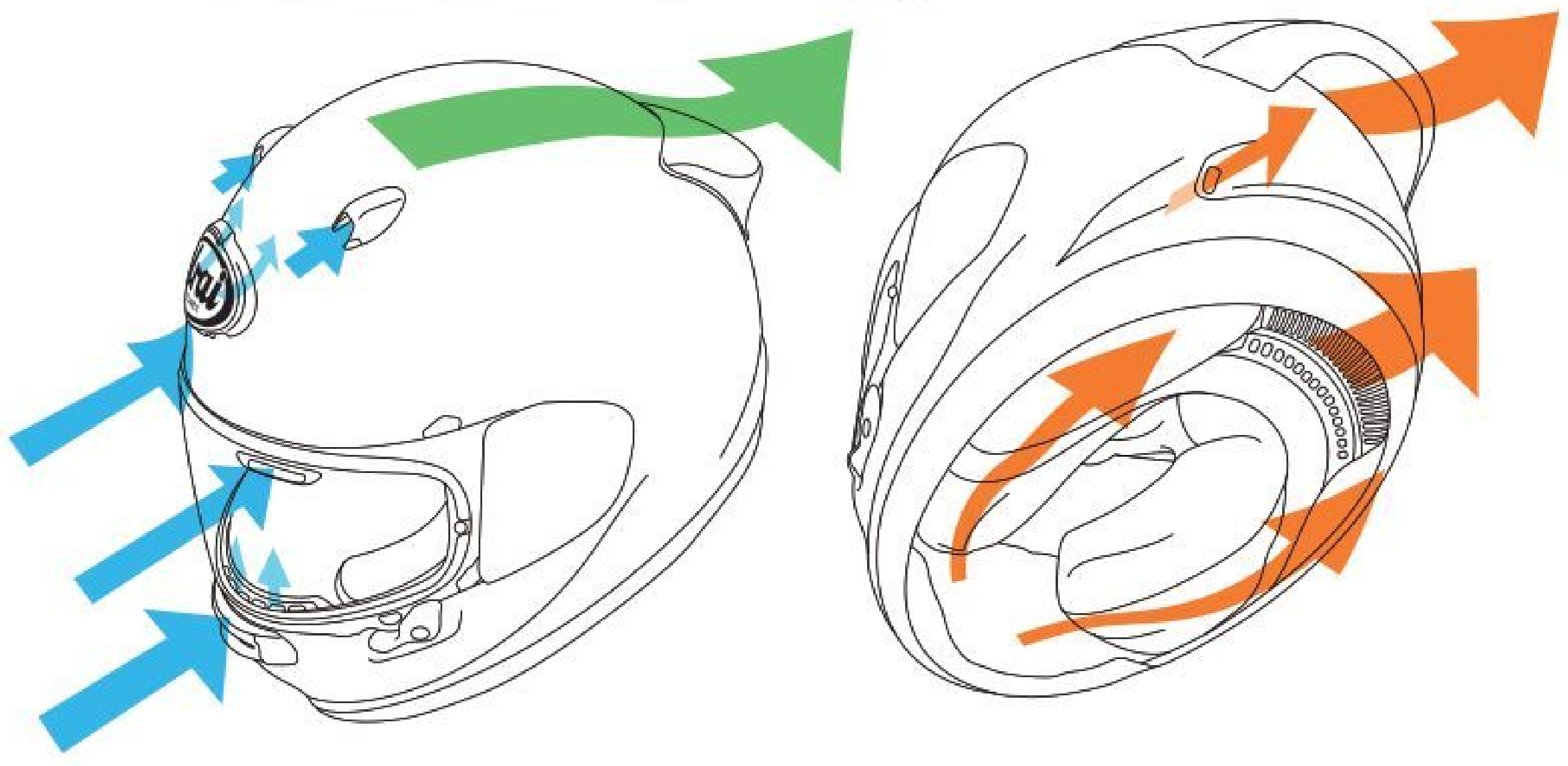
The shell is PB e-cLc (Peripherally Belted e-Complex Laminate Construction), created to glance off and spread impact forces. All vents shear or crush upon impact.

There is no integral sun visor (I wear prescription sunglasses to get round this) and fastens via a double-D ring, a pain on cold days but guarantees secure fastening.

At 1550/1600 grams (depending on shell/size) it's no lightweight, but so beautifully balanced it doesn't get tiring; I felt fresh after over two hours in the saddle. Stability is outstanding. At 70 I looked over my shoulder with not a hint of turbulence. Comfort is superb. Your cheeks are lightly squeezed by the lining but after a moment it is just… right (three previous Arais all stayed comfortable for their working life).

The neat logo vent opens in the opposite direction to the others; the chin vent has a 3-position setting. With everything open (except visor vents; I get a draft between eyes and glasses), and chin vent set to blow air across the visor, at 27 Centigrade my head stayed cool (streams of air running across my head). With multiple vents, noise is a concern, but the Quantic is quiet. At motorway pace I could hear a whisper of wind but at those speeds you should be wearing earplugs.

Visibility is excellent; it felt to me like I could hold my head more upright than my previous Arai's. Glancing to the side, the visor opening went back beyond my periphery.

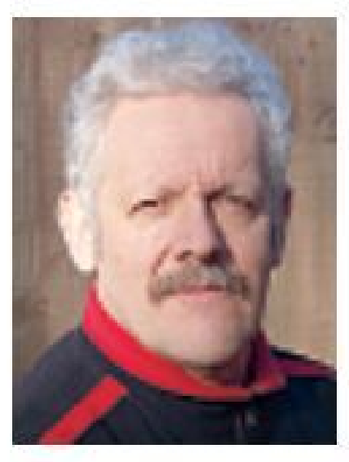


Talking visors, it comes with a Pinlock in the box, so time to remove. My wife Laura fits all our Pinlocks, experiencing a wide range of systems. Her verdict? "I really like the side pod release (and securing strap), it's easy to use.

"The visor release mechanism is fiddly, definitely better than the old system, but still a faff and certainly not as user-friendly as the AGV K6, the best (and easiest) one I've ever used."

The visor lock is my one grump. A lever opens the visor a (small) crack, while keeping it locked. To unlock, lever pushed up, pull on the (tiny) tab. Eh? With Summer gloves I could get my thumb under to release. Thicker, 3-season ones, I could operate at halt, on the move I couldn't open it. I use an excellent anti-mist product (FoggyWipe) for my glasses, but I'd prefer a 'double-lift' release system (1st lift for partial, 2nd to disengage the lock). But this won't bother most people. The Quantic is a brilliant touring helmet. Stable, quiet with effective venting, you can ride for hours (and I did) in comfort without getting tired.

A new man in the Honda hotseat...



Words: Steve Cooper
Photo: Mortons Media Archive

If 1985 had been the realisation of a dream for Honda, then 1986 began as a nightmare – double world champion Freddie Spencer would spend most the season as a spectator. Described at the time as a 'mystery arm injury', Spencer had severe issues with tendons and later admitted to being both physically and mentally exhausted by the pressure of winning those two crowns.

This meant the seat of the 1986 NSR500C was vacant and Honda needed someone with the ability to keep the flag flying. The spotlight suddenly fell on Australian Wayne Gardner who had spent the previous season racing for Honda GB on a factory-supported NS3 V3 which was the earlier format of Honda's 500cc GP stroker. No stranger to the world of Grand Prix racing, the man from down under had managed creditable rankings in the two previous seasons – 7th in 1984 and 4th in 1985.

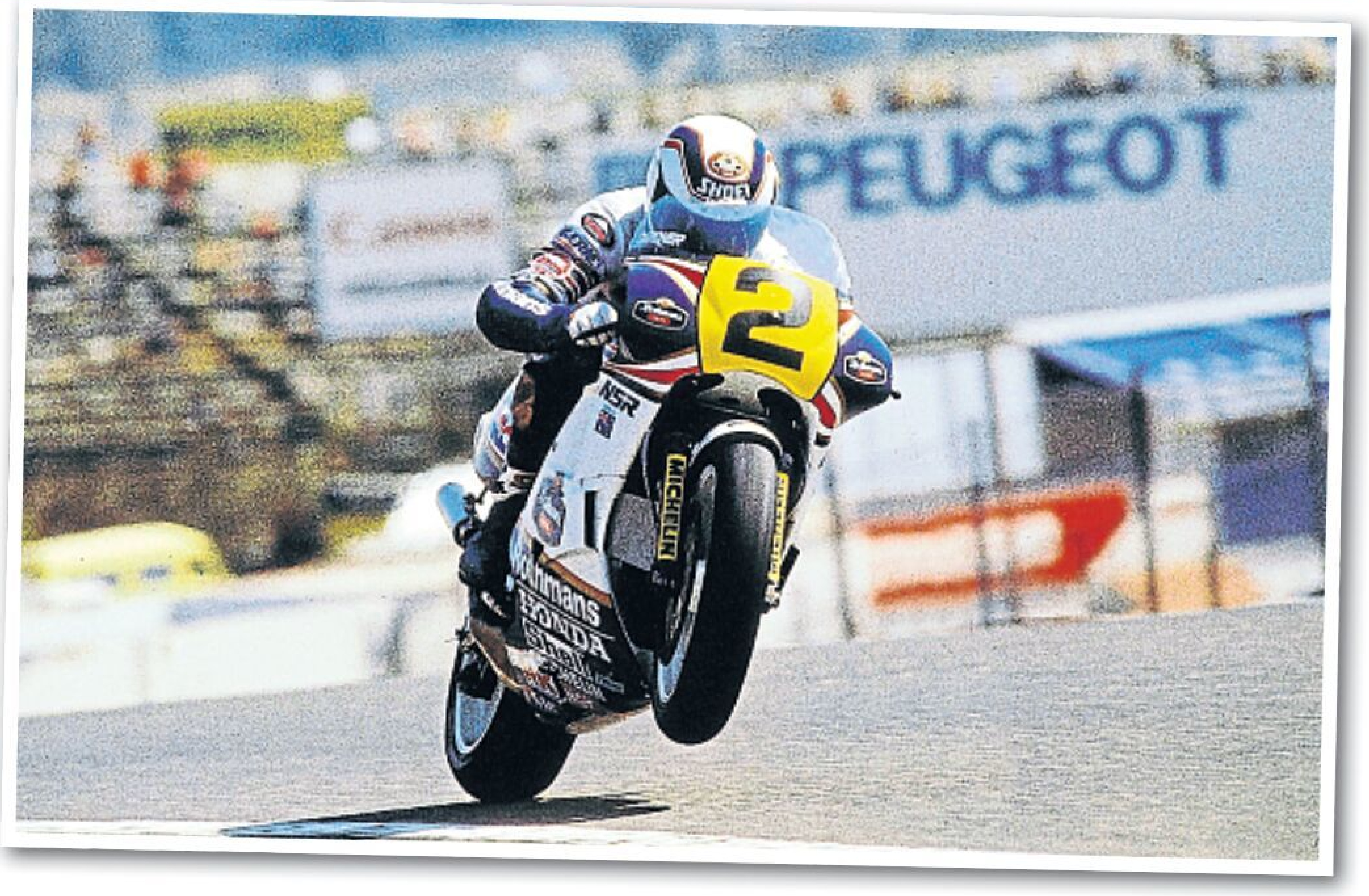
Gardner had worked his way up the ladder to a genuinely well-deserved GP ride via the normal routes of the time. Staring at 18 on a second-hand Yamaha TZ250 on domestic circuits, four years later he was hired by Mamoru Moriwaki to race in the Australian Superbike championship aboard the Moriwaki Kawasaki KZ1000 four-stroke fours.

Racer Grahame Crosby decided to 'bring Gardner on' by sponsoring him to ride in the British Superbike races. A very respectable fourth at Daytona in 1981 helped publicise his talents and just a year later he would come in fourth on The Island with the Honda Britain team. Winning the British 500cc national championship for Honda in 1984 and scoring points in all five GPs of that year that he rode in clearly illustrated both his versatility, talent and determination. Without Fast Freddie to pilot the NSR500, Wayne Gardner was the logical choice.

Honda's belief and faith in the gritty Aussie was well placed when he won the season's opening GP at Jarama in Spain. And to further qualify that achievement Gardner not only broke the lap record by some two seconds, but also out-rode the likes of Eddie Lawson, Randy Mamola and Mike Baldwin – all on hugely potent factory Yamahas. The next race in Italy was a disaster with a lowly 16th place, but the next four races saw consistent 2nd and 3rd spots.

Gardner and the NSR would remain in the top five for the rest of the year with wins in both Holland and Great Britain. At the end of the season he was just 22 points behind the winner Eddie Lawson – not bad for anyone's first full season in the premier category.

Without doubt Gardner had put up one hell of a fight, riding a machine that was effectively new to him when he took it over and seriously more vigorous than the old three-cylinder bikes. However, some of the credit has to go to HRC for its continual revision and honing of what was its first V4, two-stroke, Grand Prix bike.



Doubtless, lessons had been learnt from the old triples regarding handling, but a sea change moment happened when Honda (along with some of its rivals) adopted the delta-box alloy frame first seen back in 1982 on a Spanish machine. The brainchild of Antonio Cobas, this form of motorcycle chassis linked the key areas of headstock and swing arm pivot directly together, thereby better managing the various forces fed into them.

By the time Wayne Gardner was aboard the NSR500 HRC engineers had moved the engine forward by some 25mm, which put more weight on the front end of the bike. This significantly improved the handling – and anything that made these phenomenally quick machines easier to ride had to be a bonus.

Some might have thought the following season would see the 86 subtly refined in the avowed hope that Wayne Gardner might take the 87 title but, Honda being Honda, it had other plans!

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HARLEY-DAVIDSON Road King combination, 2004, 1450cc, two owners, excellent colour matched LAK Dutch sidecar, includes reverse gear, handbrake, sidecar yokes etc, can deliver, £12,995 Tel. 07798 866071. Email. peterpaulmoore@hotmail.co.uk Middx.

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KAWASAKI Z1000 Bobber, 1978, historic V5, 998cc J type engine, GSX1100 front and rear suspension, loud pipes, professional build and paint, ring for details, £3000 ono Tel. 01535 646006. West Yorks.

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KAWASAKI KZ650B1 1978, t&t exempt, new coils, Avon tyres, inner tubes, speedo cable, rear brake shoes, ignition barrel, battery air filter plugs, powder coated frame, oil + filter, original good chrome, got smart alloy rims + s/s spokes, can send pictures, needs tank repainting, carbs cleaning, starter clutch looking at, £1750. Tel. 07704 343331. Stockport.

MASH ROADSTAR 2017, 400cc, 1900 miles, screen, 9 months MoT, £2200 ono Tel. 01670 521432. Northumberland.

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